

PRAISE-POEMS
TO
VIṢṆU AND ŚRĪ

The Stotras of Rāmānuja's Immediate Disciples

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by

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A Translation from the Sanskrit with Introduction and Notes

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In the memory of my parents

**Durward A. Skinner, M.D., 1899-1960
and
F. Lucille Skinner, 1904-1993**

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Foreword

We are very pleased to provide to our readers the publication entitled *Praise-Poems to Viṣṇu and Śrī: The Stotras of Rāmānuja's Immediate Disciples* by Nancy Ann Nayar. While the philosophy of Rāmānuja has been widely studied, the thought of this illustrious Ācārya and his position within the Śrīvaiṣṇava *sampradāya* cannot be well understood without reference to the works of his immediate disciples and companions. Unfortunately, these compositions have been almost entirely ignored outside of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition itself. For this reason, it has been a long-standing desire of mine to see the stotras of Kūreśa and Parāśara Bhaṭṭar translated into English. The stotra poets quote the Upaniṣads time and time again; scholars of the Vedas will be interested to see the creative ways in which the philosophy of these timeless texts appear in poems of praise directed to the main deities of major Vaiṣṇava temples in Tamil Nadu.

Dr. Nancy Ann Nayar worked with the members of the Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute's staff for a period of nine months in 1986-87, during which time she translated the Sanskrit poems and began the study of the Tamil language. Her Ph.D. dissertation (McGill University, Montreal, Canada) -- a theological analysis of the stotras -- was published in 1992 by Otto Harrassowitz in Wiesbaden, Germany, under the title *Poetry As Theology: The Śrīvaiṣṇava Stotra in the Age of Rāmānuja*.

The work of Dr. Nayar is a major contribution to the study of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. It especially bridges the gap between Rāmānuja and his contemporaries, on the one hand, and the later Ācāryas on the other. The major concepts of Śrīvaiṣṇavism -- such as *prapatti* (salvation by surrender to God), the position of Lakṣmī as *puruṣakāra* (mediator between the Lord and souls), and *kaiṅkarya* (servitude to the Divine Couple) -- are found in abundance in these stotras. Hence this translation of the hymns of

Kūreśa and Parāśara Bhaṭṭar provides valuable information for scholars.

We sincerely hope that this volume will stimulate interest in the important formative years of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. It is a most valuable contribution both for those scholars who have access to the original Sanskrit compositions, and for the general public interested in learning more about the theological and devotional aspects of South Indian Vaiṣṇavism.

Thanks are due to the Manager and staff of All India Press, Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, for bringing out the book neatly and promptly.

January 1994
Bombay

K.K.A. Venkatachari
Founder-Director
and Professor

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In the preparation of this volume, I am deeply indebted to Dr. K.K.A. Venkatachari, who is simultaneously Director of the Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute and Professor at the University of Bombay. During my stay in Bombay from October 1986 to June 1987, he assisted me in the translation of the stotras, especially concerning problems regarding Śrī-vaiṣṇava idiom and semantics. He was also helpful in the difficult task of identifying phrases and images which were rendered into Sanskrit from their Tamil antecedents, the hymns of the Ālvārs. Our visits to the major Śrīvaiṣṇava shrines praised in the stotras -- the Śrīraṅgam Temple in Tirucci, Aḷakar Kōyil outside Madurai, and Varadarāja Swāmi Temple in Kāñcīpuram (all in what is now the state of Tamil Nadu) -- added substantially to my appreciation for, and sensitivity to, the many attractive descriptions of Viṣṇu's iconic incarnations and His terrestrial dwelling places contained in the stanzas.

Thanks are also due to Dr. V.V. Gangal and Pandit K.K.C. Laksmīnarasimhan for their assistance in the preparation of the initial draft of the translation of the stotras of Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar. Furthermore, Pandit Laksmīnarasimhan instructed me in the Tamil language during my stay in Bombay. Professor Richard Hayes of McGill University helped me in the translation of one particularly problematic stanza.

I am grateful to the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute for a fellowship which financed my trips to and stays in Bombay and Tamil Nadu during 1986-87.

I would like to express my appreciation to Sister Noella Bolduc, m.c.c.c. and all of the members of the MECUM Contemplative Christian Community for their prayers and friendship over the past eight years of research and writing, including Johanne Auger, Grace Fournier, Linda Friedland, Suzanne Jonas,

Marguerite de Jordy, Dorothy Ormsby, Beverly Redmond and Jennifer Thomas.

Each of my daughters -- Sheila, Kamala, and Sunita -- has contributed in her own way to my work, and I am grateful to all three for their help in the preparation of this volume. Sheila advised me regarding the format of the individual stanzas, and all of her recommendations were accepted. Kamala was particularly helpful during the study which preceded the undertaking of this project; she also discussed with me some of the theological issues raised by the poems. Sunita, too, was supportive, and encouraged me in my study of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition.

Above all, I want to express my gratitude to my husband, Baldev Raj. He meticulously and uncomplainingly edited the final draft of the manuscript. His perseverance as a research scholar and his ethic of hard work have been an inspiration to me. Ever encouraging throughout the long time of research and writing, he provided continuing support which is what enabled me to complete this project.

Montreal
Pentecost 1994

Nancy Ann Nayar

Abbreviations

AāP	Amalaṇātippirāṇ	MaNārUp	Mahānārāyaṇa
AMS	Atimānuṣa		Upaniṣad
	Stava	MBh	Mahābhārata
AŚI	Aṣṭā Ślokī	MTA	Mutal Tiru
BhG	Bhagavad Gītā		Antāti
BhGBh	Bhagavad Gītā	MTL	Madras Tamil
	Bhāṣya		Lexicon
BhGD	Bhagavad Guṇa	MUp	Muṇḍaka
	Darpana		Upaniṣad
BhP	Bhāgavata	NG	Nitya Grantha
	Purāṇa	NTM	Nācciyār
BṛhadUp	Bṛhadāryanyaka		Tirumoli
	Upaniṣad	PA	Prapannāmṛtam
ChUp	Chāndogya	PĀTM	Periyālvār
	Upaniṣad		Tirumoli
CŚI	Catuḥ Śloki	Pmāl'TM	Perumāḷ
DP	Divya		Tirumoli
	Prabandham	PSV	Pañca Stava
DSC	Divyasūri		Vyākhyānam
	Caritam	PTA	Periya Tirumuṭi
GPP	Ārāyirapaṭi		Aṭaiyu
	Kuruparamparā -	PTAnt	Periya Tiru
	prapāvam		Antāti
GT	Gadya Traya	PTM	Periya Tirumoli
ITA	Iranṭām Tiru	PuSū	Puruṣa Sūkta
	Antāti	SBS	Sundarabāhu
KNC	Kaṇṇinuṇ Ciṛut -		Stava
	tāmpu	ŚGad	Śaraṇāgati
KUp	Kaṭha Upaniṣad		Gadya
M-W	Monier-	ŚGRK	Śrī Guṇa
	Williams,		Ratnakoṣa
	Sanskrit-English	SR	Stotra Ratna
	Dictionary	ŚrīBh	Śrī Bhāṣya

ŚrīRTS	Śrīmad Rahasya Trayasāra	Taitt Brāh	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
ŚRNS	Śrīraṅganātha Stotra	TaittUp	Taittirīya Upaniṣad
ŚRRS I	Śrīraṅgarāja Stava : The First 100 Stanzas	TMālai	Tirumālai
		TP	Tiruppāvai
		TVM	Tiruvāymoḷi
ŚRRS II	Śrīraṅgarāja Stava: The Latter 100 Stanzas	VaiGad	Vaikuṇṭha Gadya
		VP	Viṣṇu Purāṇa
ŚS	Śrī Stava	VRS	Varadarāja Stava
SuUp	Subāla Upaniṣad	VS	Vedārtha Saraṅgraha
ŚvetUp	Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad	VSN	Viṣṇu Sahasra Nāma
ŚVS	Śrīvaikuṇṭha Stava	VSū	Viṣṇu Sūkta
		YMD	Yatīndramata Dipikā

Introduction

The well-known Viśiṣṭādvaita philosopher-theologian Rāmānuja (c.1107-1137) is regarded by the members of his Śrīvaiṣṇava community as their chief intellectual leader and teacher (Ācārya). Among the extant compositions of Rāmānuja's immediate disciples and Śrīvaiṣṇava contemporaries are ten praise-poems or stotras. Given the close relationship of their authors with Rāmānuja, one of the most important Hindu thinkers of all times, it is indeed surprising that until now only a few of these 716 stanzas have been translated into English. This present volume, then, consists of a translation of the complete stotra collection of the Ācārya-philosopher's immediate disciple Kūreśa (Tamil, Kūrattālvān) -- referred to in the earliest hagiographical texts as Rāmānuja's favourite disciple -- and Kūreśa's son, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, who was one of Rāmānuja's immediate successors in an Ācārya or guru line which extends up to the present day. Importantly, the stotra verses themselves substantiate Kūreśa's close relationship with Rāmānuja, as well as Bhaṭṭar's position of leadership within the community of Śrīvaiṣṇavas centred in the Tamil-speaking area of South India -- worshippers of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa Who is eternally accompanied by His chief consort Śrī-Lakṣmī.

The word stotra (synonymous with the equally familiar terms *stava* and *stuti*) is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root *stu* meaning "to praise, to laud, to extol, to celebrate". Among the oldest of Hindu literary genres, its origins go back to the *Rg Veda*. Important in pan-Indian Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, the stotra has played an especially important role in the development of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. Kūreśa's and Bhaṭṭar's stotras are particularly fascinating documents because, considered collectively, they are the first extant compositions that reveal the

distinctive Śrīvaiṣṇava world-view; indeed, they contain a unified theological vision based on an intricate and selective blending of the three streams of scripture sacred to Tamilian Vaiṣṇavas: (1) the Sanskrit Veda and its auxiliaries, the Śāstras, the Purāṇas, and the Epics as interpreted by Rāmānuja, (2) the Tamil Veda, comprised of 4000 Tamil verses collectively known as *Divya Prabandham*, composed by twelve Vaiṣṇava devotees who lived from the 6th to the 10th century C.E. (ten of whom are referred to as Ālvārs, or “those immersed in God”), and (3) the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, Sanskrit texts containing chapters on cosmology, meditation, iconography, and temple construction and ritual.

Significantly, praise-poems or stotras are found in all three streams of Śrīvaiṣṇava scripture; therefore, they served as an ideal medium for the initial synthesis of these three strands during the crucial formative years of the tradition. Elements from all three streams of scripture, which form the theological foundation underlying the stotras of Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar, appear therein as an INTEGRATED AND UNIFIED THEOLOGICAL VISION, as has been clearly demonstrated at some length in my in-depth analysis of the stotra collection entitled *Poetry as Theology: The Śrīvaiṣṇava Stotra in the Age of Rāmānuja* (1992). The intensely emotional nature of the Ālvār poets’ devotion -- their unique contribution to Hindu religiosity (Hardy 1983) -- was assimilated into the Śrīvaiṣṇava community’s Sanskrit literature through these early stotras composed during the very lifetime of Rāmānuja. The way in which categories and terminology from the Vedānta are joined with an emotional religiosity founded on the Ālvārs is, indeed, fascinating.

The function of the ancient and important literary genre of the stotra is, however, multidimensional. Liturgically, the stotra appears to have played an increasingly important role in Southern Vaiṣṇava temples, a development that must be connected with the emotional tenor of temple religion in the Tamil lands (Nayar 1992:22-23). Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar composed hymns dedicated to Viṣṇu’s most beloved iconic incarnations, such as Lord Raṅga (and His consort Śrī) of the Śrīraṅgam Temple in Tiruccirāpaḷli,

Lord Varadarāja at Kāñcīpuram, and Lord Sundara (Tamil, Aḷakar) of Aḷakar Kōyil outside the famous city of Madurai. In each case, these hymns are recited even today in their appropriate temples as an integral part of Vaiṣṇava temple ritual. Kūreśa's entire hymnal, collectively referred to as *Pañca Stava*, is chanted monthly in the temple of his hometown of Kūram, a village not far from Kāñcīpuram.

Śrīvaiṣṇavas regard stotra recitation as an effective means of obtaining boons, such as the cure of diseases, the birth of a son, the restoration of mental health, or even the attainment of knowledge. Bhaṭṭar's commentary on the "thousand names of Viṣṇu", which he identifies as a stotra, contains a lengthy explication of the efficacy of the chanting of the names of God, an efficacy which stotras as a genre are generally believed to possess. According to Bhaṭṭar, however, the stotra fulfills its function most distinctly when it is recited purely out of devotion, and for no ulterior purpose.

The chanting of stotras as a form of personal devotion is an important feature of Śrīvaiṣṇava spirituality. In this tradition of emotional devotion, the religious sentiments fostered by the chanting of praise-poems are certainly important. Yet the objective efficacy of stotra recitation is equally significant. According to Viśiṣṭādvaita epistemology, there are three means to valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*): direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), and verbal testimony (*śabda*). Recollection or remembrance (*smṛti*) is a sub-category of perception. Among the examples of recollection listed in the important Viśiṣṭādvaita handbook called *Yatīndramata Dipikā* is the spontaneous remembrance of previously-perceived sacred places, such as Śrīraṅgam, and the recollection of the lovely, divine, auspicious iconic form of Śrī Venkateśa (*divya-maṅgala-vigraha-smṛti*) while thinking deeply (1.19). Thus the recollection of particular iconic incarnations is, according to Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding, a form of the direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) of God. Correspondingly, among Śrīvaiṣṇavas an important function of the recitation of stotras, with their graphic descriptions both of God and His terrestrial dwelling

places, is the stimulation of the remembrance of particular iconic incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu, leading to valid knowledge of God.

The Stotras

The stotras of Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar contain a wide variety of types of verses. Apart from the many stanzas of interest to students of Vaiṣṇava theology, there are verses that reveal something of the social milieu in which they were composed, and others that substantiate hagiographical stories concerning their authors and Rāmānuja. Likewise, many stanzas give us a glimpse into the personal religious experience and the deep devotion of their poet-authors. Because genres of biography and personal reminiscences were unknown to the Hindu literary world of the 11th-12th centuries, this, in itself, makes the stotras valuable documents.

A basic understanding of the Śrīvaiṣṇava conception of God is necessary for the comprehension both of the structure and content of these poems of praise -- all celebrations of God's gracious condescension and accessibility. One of the most distinctive features of Śrīvaiṣṇava theology is expressed in the doctrine of the five forms or modes (*pañca-prakāra*) of Viṣṇu, no one of which is more fully God than the other: (1) *Para* is the Śrīvaiṣṇava technical term for Viṣṇu Who, in His transcendent form, dwells in the Supreme Heaven of Vaikuṇṭha; (2) *Vyūhāvatāra* denotes Viṣṇu's four-fold creative cosmic emanation; (3) *Vibhavāvatāra* is the term by which Śrīvaiṣṇavas refer to Viṣṇu's occasional incarnations limited to specific times and places, the most popular of Whom are Rāma and Kṛṣṇa; (4) *Antaryāmin* is Viṣṇu as Indweller of the entire cosmos, and especially as present in the human heart; and (5) *Arcāvatāra*, the central focus of Śrīvaiṣṇava devotion, is the technical term for Viṣṇu's incarnation as a worshipping icon. One especially significant feature of South Indian Vaiṣṇavism is that each iconic incarnation has a unique identity which is at all times maintained.

Śrīvaikuṇṭha Stava (ŚVS)

Regarded by Śrīvaiṣṇavas as Kūreśa's earliest composition, *Poem in Praise of Śrīvaikuṇṭha*, as its title suggests, is a eulogy of Viṣṇu's Highest Heaven called Vaikuṇṭha. As such, it contains numerous stanzas in praise of God's supernal, transcendent form (*para*). Heavily influenced by the Upaniṣads and continuous both with the philosophical and devotional writings of Rāmānuja, its basic structure is the following:

Kūreśa lauds his Ācārya Rāmānuja and Nammālvār (vs. 1-3), offers introductory verses in praise of Viṣṇu and Vaikuṇṭha, and bemoans his inability to adequately laud such lofty subjects (vs. 4-10).

Following the epistemology established by Rāmānuja, Kūreśa considers the valid means to knowledge with reference to Vaikuṇṭha in vs. 11-18. Then, in the section extending from v. 19 to v. 38, Kūreśa establishes Viṣṇu's essential lordship, citing a number of Upaniṣadic statements, and refutes a variety of schools of thought regarding the nature of Viṣṇu's creatorship and His relation to the world.

In vs. 39-48, Kūreśa extols Viṣṇu's Supreme Heaven known as Vaikuṇṭha, and in vs. 49-64, following his Ācārya Rāmānuja's philosophy of God, he praises the auspicious qualities of the Lord, and the specifics of His creatorship. He gives us a definition of liberation in v. 65.

In the next fifteen verses, heavily influenced by Yāmuna's *Stotra Ratna* and Rāmānuja's *Vaikuṇṭha Gadya*, the poet praises the beautiful form of the Lord, including His weapons, attendants and consorts. The remainder of the poem consists of passages of extraordinary self-abasement and reflections on the author's unworthiness. This lengthy section is followed by three concluding verses consisting of prayers invoking the Lord's protection.

Atimānuṣa Stava (AMS)

Poem in Praise of the Superhuman [Activities of God] consists of 61 stanzas extolling Viṣṇu's occasional incarnations. Love of paradox, hinted at in Kūreśa's other poems, is a central feature of this important and "typically Śrīvaiṣṇava" work, replete with humour and irony. Kūreśa's own enjoyment of the tension between the incomprehensibility and imperceptibility of Viṣṇu's supernal form and the vulnerability and radical accessibility visible in His many occasional incarnations forms the unifying feature of the poem. The poet's aim is less the exploration of the theological or philosophical implications of this tension than the relish of the polarity inherent in God's essential nature: the very God Who is "completely invisible and unable to be apprehended by speech or mind" (v. 8) condescends to complete vulnerability as Kṛṣṇa, who was "bound with a rope" (vs. 36, 40), stole fresh butter in Vraja (v. 35), and became "a laughing stock for the cowherdresses" (v. 38).

After a stanza introducing the topic of the stotra, Kūreśa continues his poem with several stanzas in praise of the Lord's iconic incarnation in the Śrīraṅgam Temple (vs. 2-4). The significance of this should not be overlooked. The stotras of Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar contain many stanzas which express a passionate longing for God's presence and for surrender to Him, stanzas uniformly directed to one or another of Viṣṇu's iconic incarnations. By way of contrast, stanzas in praise of God's occasional incarnations are considerably more restrained. Following the several passion-filled verses directed to the Lord at Śrīraṅgam -- God's most accessible form as *arcāvatāra* -- Kūreśa's praise moves in typical Śrīvaiṣṇava style from the most accessible form to the least. Kūreśa lauds Viṣṇu's occasional incarnation (as Vāmana in v. 5), His four-fold creative cosmic emanation in v. 6, and His transcendent form as Lord of Vaikuṇṭha in vs. 7-8.

In the theologically important stanzas 9-10, Kūreśa explores the necessity for and wonder at God's accessibility in His various incarnations. Verses 11-16 include an unrelated variety of stories

highlighting the accessibility of the Supreme Lord, leading to the large main section of the hymn. The poet delights in the paradox of Viṣṇu's incarnations as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa -- stanzas composed in a teasing mood (vs. 17-58). We see the devotee Kūreśa at his best in these verses expressive of intimacy with God. The last three stanzas of the hymn's main section extol a variety of Viṣṇu's "superhuman" activities. Kūreśa then concludes his poem with a three-stanza reflection on his helplessness and unworthiness before God, taking courage only because of the Lord's unbounded compassion.

Sundarabāhu Stava (SBS)

Of Kūreśa's five stotras, *Praise-Poem to the Beautiful-Armed [Lord]* has been most directly influenced by the Tamil poems of the Ālvārs. Composed in Vanagiri (known in Tamil literature as Tirumāliṛuñcōlai) during a period of its author's separation from his Ācārya Rāmānuja due to troubled times in Śrīraṅgam (vs. 129-31), the poem contains translations into Sanskrit of numerous Tamil epithets of God and place. The very names Sundara and Sundarabāhu are translations of the Tamil epithets Aḷakar and Cundarat toluṭaiyāṇ, employed by several Ālvārs.

Much of the general imagery and certain aspects of the structure of this praise-poem are based on the Ālvārs, as well. Numerous phrases, and in one instance an entire stanza (v. 92), are renderings from the Tamil Ālvār poems. One reason for such heavy Ālvār influence is undoubtedly the fact that five *Divya Prabandham* poets (Puttat Ālvār, Periyālvār, Āṇṭāl, Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, and Nammālvār) composed verses celebrating the beauty of this particular iconic incarnation of Viṣṇu and His environs.

After the initial verse of *Sundarabāhu Stava*, in which the poet honours his Ācārya Rāmānuja and establishes the poem's subject and purpose, Kūreśa moves directly into the praise of the auspiciousness and loveliness of Lord Sundarabāhu and His terrestrial dwelling place (vs. 2-13). Praise of the Lord through the extolling

of His Vanagiri abode continues on and off throughout the remainder of the stotra. Stanzas 24-32 laud the auspicious qualities of God, while His beauty is the special subject of vs. 33-38. A part-by-part description of the body of Sundara, starting with His head, begins in v. 39 and continues through v. 68. Here we see the frequent use of poetic metaphors common to both Sanskrit and Tamil love poetry.

The consorts and attendants of the Lord in Vaiṣṇava are the subject of vs. 69-80, with special reference to the transcendent form of God (*para*), extending through v. 83. Beginning in v. 84, in a style similar to that of the Ālvār hymns, Sundara is praised for having made Himself accessible in His various occasional incarnations.

Sundara of Vanagiri is linked to the three main Śrīvaiṣṇava holy places of Veṅkaṭa Mountain (Tirupati), Hastiśaila (Varadarāja Swāmi Temple in Kāñcīpuram), and Śrīraṅgam in vs. 117-19. The remaining stanzas consist of Kūreśa's reflections on his own unworthiness, the Lord's compassion, and a series of historically significant personal petitions to Lord Sundara.

Varadarāja Stava (VRS)

The 102 stanzas of *Praise-Poem to the Boon-Bestower King* are directed to the main icon in the Varadarāja Swāmi Temple, located in the famous temple town of Kāñcī. According to Śrīvaiṣṇava hagiography, the stotra was composed by Kūreśa at the behest of his Ācārya Rāmānuja as a means of requesting the restoration of Kūreśa's vision, lost when he was blinded by a Śaiva king who was persecuting Vaiṣṇavas. As the story has it, when Kūreśa reached verse 23 he requested the Lord to provide divine (*aprakṛta*) vision by which he might see God's glory forever, and he was granted the ability to see Lord Varadarāja and Rāmānuja. (Kūreśa himself refers to Lord Varadarāja as having restored the sight of "more than a hundred people" in SBS, v. 126.)

The main epithets of both place and deity in this stotra are based on older Tamil names, even though the shrine itself was praised for certain only by a single Ālvār, Puttat, in two verses addressed to “the One Who dwells in Attiyūr” (see n. 1). According to local legend, the site of Varadarāja Swāmi Temple in Kāñcī is associated both with the elephants that Hindus believe to be the guardians of the four directions -- which are said to have worshipped Viṣṇu on the very spot where the temple was later constructed -- and with the lord of elephants Gajendra, much loved by the Ālvārs. Kūreśa frequently refers to the sacred site as Hastigiri/ Karigiri (Elephant Hill or Hill of the Elephant(s)). Replete with imagery common to both Sanskrit and classical Tamil love poetry, *Varadarāja Stava* contains many stanzas important to the understanding of Śrīvaiṣṇavism’s theology of incarnation.

Vs. 1-14 celebrate the visible presence on Elephant Hill of the Supreme Lord about Whom the Vedas speak. Beginning in v. 15, Kūreśa moves on to the praise of Viṣṇu’s four-fold creative cosmic emanation (*vyūhāvatāra*) (vs. 15-16), and the Lord’s innumerable auspicious qualities (vs. 17-20). The main section of the poem consists of a forty-two verse celebration of Lord Varadarāja’s loveliness, including a part-by-part head-to-foot description, based on imagery from the Ālvārs and classical Sanskrit court poetry similar to that contained in *Sundarabāhu Stava*, vs. 39-68.

A number of verses follow in which the poet expresses a sense of wonder at the Lord’s need for, and dependence upon, His devotees. In his own typical fashion, Kūreśa poignantly reflects upon his own unworthiness and sinfulness (vs. 72-88). In the final verses, he combines praise of the Lord’s unbounded compassion with three stanzas concerning an unnamed petition (vs. 89-91), an expression of surrender to the Lord founded on His great mercy (vs. 91-92, 94-95), and the request to be forever His servant (vs. 96, 98). Kūreśa’s final resort in his appeal for God’s mercy is his relationship with his teacher Rāmānuja, a member of the illustrious line of Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas, at whose feet he has taken refuge (v. 102) .

Śrī Stava (ŚS)

Kūreśa's *Praise-Poem to [the Goddess] Śrī* consists of only eleven stanzas. Chronologically, this poem stands midway between the short compositions in her praise by Kūreśa's predecessors (Yāmuna's *Catuḥ Ślokī* and Rāmānuja's short laudation of Śrī in his *Śaraṇāgati Gadya*) and his son Bhaṭṭar's longer and much more elaborate hymn to the Goddess called *Śrī Guṇa Ratnakośa*. Yāmuna's and Rāmānuja's influence can be felt in almost every verse of Kūreśa's praise-poem.

Supplemented by the stanzas referring to Śrī scattered throughout Kūreśa's other stotras and by Bhaṭṭar's poem addressed to the Goddess mentioned above, *Śrī Stava* provides us with a good understanding of the Śrīvaiṣṇava view of Śrī at the time of the early Ācāryas.

Śrīraṅgarāja Stava: The First Hundred Stanzas (ŚRRS I)

Praise-Poem to the King [of the Universe] at Śrīraṅgam I, the first of Bhaṭṭar's stotras treated here, is directed to the main icon of the great Śrīraṅgam Temple located near the modern city of Tirucirāppalli. During the time of the Ālvārs, Śrīraṅgam was already an important centre of Vaiṣṇava worship, and Nāthamuni, first in the lineage of Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas, is said to have resided there.

Bhaṭṭar's stotra is unique among the poems of the early Ācāryas in that it clearly depicts the temple layout, built according to the architectural requirements of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. Bhaṭṭar praises the temple's landscape before entering the temple proper and then, verse-by-verse, engages in a laudatory description of each shrine that he passes as he makes his way to the Inner Sanctum. *Śrīraṅgarāja Stava* is recited before the main icon in the Śrīraṅgam Temple on festive occasions such as Brahmotsava.

The recitation of *tanīyaṅs* ("solitary" verses) in praise of the Ālvārs and Ācāryas, strung together to form a *guru-paramparā* or listing of the lineage of preceptors, is a required part of daily

Śrīvaiṣṇava spiritual practice. Customarily, one begins with one's own Ācārya, one's Ācārya's Ācārya and so forth through the most revered teachers, such as Rāmānuja, Yāmuna, Nāthamuni, and Nammālvār, through Viṣvaksena and Śrī, clear up to Lord Viṣṇu Himself. While the official *guru-paramparā* does not appear to have been formalized until after Bhaṭṭar's time, he gives us a virtual listing in vs. 1-12 of the poem: his father Kūreśa (v. 1), followed by his Ācārya Empār, Rāmānuja, Yāmuna, Nāthamuni, Nammālvār, the Goddess Śrī, and the Lord Himself. This section is followed by eight verses in which the poet bemoans his inability to adequately praise the Lord. With v. 21, Bhaṭṭar begins a twelve-verse eulogy of the environs of Lord Raṅga's terrestrial abode, including several lovely descriptions of the island-town of Śrīraṅgam and the Kāverī River which surrounds it.

As Bhaṭṭar begins his entry into the temple proper (v. 32), he honours the leaders stationed in each of the four directions who guard the temple from its outermost wall, and praises the temple as a whole in vs. 33-36. Beginning with v. 37, Bhaṭṭar salutes the gatekeepers in order to gain their permission to enter the temple (a custom followed by devotees even today), and then celebrates various parts of the complex, including the thousand-pillared hall and the lotus pool. In v. 41, as he approaches the shrine of the Ālvārs, the poet asks these "ten persons" to take pity on him. After several more verses in praise of temple and town, he reaches the figure of Narasimha, and from there proceeds on to the shrine of the Ācāryas (v. 48).

As Bhaṭṭar nears the Inner Sanctum, he praises the many attendants of the Lord that he sees along the way (vs. 50-57). The Inner Sanctum and the Lord's and Śrī's ladies-in-waiting are described and extolled in vs. 58-62. The remainder of the stotra is comprised of verses in praise of Viṣṇu's and Śrī's iconic incarnations Who dwell within the Inner Sanctum. The beauty of the *ut-sava-bera* -- the smaller, portable icon of the standing Lord used in festive temple processions -- is extolled in vs. 63-74, while the remaining verses praise the *mūla-bera* -- the well-known immov-

able icon of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa reclining on the serpent Ādiśeṣa -- permanently fixed within the Inner Sanctum.

Śrīraṅgarāja Stava: The Latter Hundred Stanzas (ŚRRS II)

Praise-Poem to the King [of the Universe] at Śrīraṅgam II is the most philosophical of the early Śrīvaiṣṇava stotras. After a general praise of Śruti and Smṛti (vs. 1-4), Bhaṭṭar begins a series of occasionally humorous refutations of various philosophical schools of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina traditions (vs. 5-16). Having reviewed the valid means to knowledge according to Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy (vs. 17-26), Bhaṭṭar begins his praise of Lord Viṣṇu's auspicious qualities, including verses which carefully define each of the Lord's famous "six qualities".

Beginning with the inaccessible and imperceptible transcendent God and moving through His increasingly accessible forms (in contrast to the structure of Kūreṣa's AMS), Bhaṭṭar praises the transcendent Lord *para* in vs. 33-37 and Viṣṇu's four-fold creative cosmic emanation (vs. 39-40). After several verses on the creation of the universe (vs. 41-44), he moves to the praise of Viṣṇu's occasional incarnations and His accessibility as expressed in a variety of His earthly activities (vs. 45-73).

Important in the theology of *arcāvatāra*, v. 74 forms a link between the verses celebrating Viṣṇu's occasional incarnations and His incarnations as a temple icon (with special reference to Lord Śrīraṅga). Beginning with v. 83, Bhaṭṭar reviews the variety of means to reach the Lord. The power of the Lord to effect the union of the "surrendered" devotee with Himself is celebrated in vs. 87-89, where Bhaṭṭar calls the Lord both "the means and the goal". The poet concludes with several verses of supplication and self-abasement which, at the same time, celebrate the Lord's patience and compassion.

Śrī Guṇa Ratnakośa (ŚGRK)

In *Jewel-Treasury of Śrī's Auspicious Qualities*, a companion-piece to *Śrīraṅgarāja Stava*, Bhaṭṭar directs most of his stanzas to Śrī's iconic incarnation in the Śrīraṅgam Temple. From a purely literary point of view, ŚGRK is perhaps the most attractive of the early Śrīvaiṣṇava stotras. Theologically, too, it is the most important of the early compositions on the Goddess Śrī, for it contains (in more elaborate form than in the works of Yāmuna, Rāmānuja, or Kūreśa) the several elements which converge in the doctrine of Śrī as the essential mediator (*puruṣakāra*) between the Lord and souls.

Bhaṭṭar takes refuge with Śrī, and praises her for her role in the creation, preservation, and dissolution of the worlds in the first two verses of the poem. Śrī is then lauded for enriching the loveliness of her husband (v. 3) and for being the very basis of His supremacy (the later tradition calls this the doctrine of *śrī-patitva*). In vs. 5-8, according to the custom in Sanskrit stotra poetry, Bhaṭṭar laments his inability to laud Śrī appropriately, and pleads for her inspiration so that he might complete his praise-poem to her. Much of *Śrī Guṇa Ratnakośa* expresses the centrality of Śrī to the Śrīvaiṣṇava world-view; indeed, scripture itself is said to have as one of its main purposes the acclamation of the Goddess (for example, vs. 10, 12-14). Śrī's powerful glance -- the goodness that it brings, and the deprivation that arises from its absence -- is a theme of many stanzas (for example, vs. 15-18). The very creation of Viṣṇu's Supreme Heaven and all the worlds are said to be solely for Śrī's pleasure (vs. 19-22). Bhaṭṭar then extols Śrī as Mistress of the Supreme Heaven of Vaikuṇṭha, and praises her relationship with Viṣṇu and their inherent inseparability (vs. 23-31).

In v. 32, Bhaṭṭar begins the praise of the auspicious qualities of the Supreme Couple, employing a variety of epithets in the vocative case, specifically mentioning Śrī's iconic incarnation in Śrīraṅgam. He appears thoroughly to enjoy comparing and con-

trasting the auspicious qualities of the masculine Lord Raṅga and the feminine Śrī in vs. 33-37.

Icon-makers are required to memorize v. 38, a description of Śrī in a sitting posture, because it gives the idea of how an icon of Lakṣmī must look (as she appears in Vaikuṇṭha) when worshipped independently. Several of the stanzas which follow are the first in the tradition to highlight the erotic relationship between Viṣṇu and Śrī, its enjoyment by the devotees, and its relation to Śrī's role as mediator between the Lord and souls (vs. 40-47). These verses draw heavily on the images of Sanskrit love poetry.

The relish that the devotee has for the presence of Viṣṇu along with Śrī, as well as their eternal inseparability which extends to Viṣṇu's descents to earth in incarnational form, is expressed in v. 48. The poet then praises several of these occasional incarnations (vs. 49-55). Bhaṭṭar concludes his poem with a celebration of the most beloved of all the Supreme Couple's forms, their incarnation in a worshipping temple icon (vs. 56-61).

Aṣṭā Ślokī (AŚ)

Eight Ślokas is included in most published Śrīvaiṣṇava stotra collections. While stylistically the work resembles a stotra insofar as it is written in Sanskrit poetic verse and its final stanza is directed to the Lord, content-wise it is the forerunner of the important Śrīvaiṣṇava literary genre called the *rahasya-grantha* -- texts composed mostly in Maṇipravāḷa, a synthetic form of Sanskritized Tamil, in explication of the three main Śrīvaiṣṇava *mantras*.

While the three *mantras* are given to every Śrīvaiṣṇava during the initiation ceremony of *pañca-saṁskāra*, and their recitation is performed daily by members of the community, their elaborate meanings are taught only to those who express a desire to delve more deeply into the spiritual life. Because the meaning of Bhaṭṭar's *Aṣṭā Ślokī* can best be ascertained in the light of the later *rahasya-grantha* commentaries, it has been suggested that

this cryptic poem is a summary of a pre-existing oral tradition (Mumme 1987:12).

Vs. 1-4 consist of an explication of the *tiru-mantra*: “*Aum namo nārāyaṇāya*” or “AUM! Homage to Nārāyaṇa!”. Vs. 5-6 explain the meaning of the *dvaya-mantra*: “*śrīman nārāyaṇa caraṇau śaraṇaṁ prapadye, śrīmate nārāyaṇāya namaḥ*” or “I take refuge in/with the feet of Nārāyaṇa Who is [eternally united] with Śrī. Homage to Nārāyaṇa Who is [eternally united] with Śrī”. Vs. 7-8 explain the *carama-śloka*, the words uttered by Kṛṣṇa (to Arjuna) in *Bhagavad Gītā* 18:66: “*sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja, ahaṁ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*”, or “Having relinquished all *dharma*s, resort to me alone as refuge; I will release you from all sins. Do not grieve”.

Śrīraṅganātha Stotra (ŚRNS)

The brief work called *Praise-Poem to the Lord [of the Universe] at Śrīraṅgam* appears to have been composed by Bhaṭṭar when he was away from his beloved home of Śrīraṅgam. Several of its verses express the poet-Ācārya’s longing to see Lord Raṅga once again (vs. 3-5). Interestingly, v. 8 confirms the hagiographical story of Rāmānuja’s visit to North India.

Text, Translation and Notes

This translation of the stotras of Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar is based on the edition of their works contained in *Stotramālā*, edited by the Ācāryas of Kāñci and published most recently in 1969. This edition is the most accessible to Śrīvaiṣṇavas today. Until as recently as the last century, original copies of the Ācāryas’ manuscripts were destroyed by fire or put into a river after a copy was made by a son or grandson. This procedure was not regarded as a destruction of the manuscript; rather, revered manuscripts were consigned to water or fire (both regarded by Hindus as pure

elements) in order to prevent them from being mishandled or treated disrespectfully. In spite of this, however, a critical edition of the stotras has been deemed unnecessary for several reasons.

The Śrīvaiṣṇava community, close-knit and geographically well-defined, has an unbroken line of preceptors dating from its first Ācārya Nāthamuni (c. 10th century C.E.). Most of its literature (other than the philosophical commentaries of Rāmānuja) until recently remained unknown to, and unread by, those outside the community. The problem of widely diverging redactions with differences reflecting social class or geographical region -- as exists in the case of popular pan-Indian texts such as the Epics and Purāṇas -- is non-existent in the early Śrīvaiṣṇava sectarian literature. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the texts were restricted to a small community with a relatively cohesive world-view (inspite of the later divisions within the community). Furthermore, the first printed editions of many Śrīvaiṣṇava texts (including the stotras) were made by traditional scholars beginning in the 19th century. At that time, most available manuscripts were consulted; in fact, the printed editions themselves often contain variant readings. The text of *Stotramālā* was in each case compared with the other extant published editions (see bibliography), but because only two discrepancies were of any theological significance, I have chosen not to refer to the variant readings in the notes except in these two instances. With respect to all other stanzas, I believe that the comparison of variant readings would create an unnecessary complication in these already complicated texts.

The Translation

Certain difficult decisions must be made in the preparation of any translation. The non-technical and fluid language of the stotra poems can be particularly problematic. I have mostly been concerned with the lucidity of the overall meaning of each stanza, rather than with the literal emulation of Sanskrit grammar. In places, words or phrases, especially compounds, have been rather

loosely translated in order to avoid awkward constructions, which may be found to be frustrating to readers in English. While available commentaries were sometimes consulted in order to establish the correct prose order of the verses, in some instances stanzas have been reconstructed in order to allow for a somewhat more natural flow to the English language. Hopefully, this has made for a translation that will appeal to an audience beyond Sanskritists and academics specializing in Hinduism who can, in any case, consult the original text.

It has been my intention to translate the verses, especially those which are renderings of Ālvār phraseology, imagery and emotion, according to Śrīvaiṣṇava idiom. The particular format for the translated verses, which was recommended by Sheila Nayar, was adopted not because I believe that the translations themselves would qualify as “poetry” (many would certainly not), but because the breaking up of the verses into small units makes for a clarity and readability not found in many stotra translations up to now.

The Notes

Notes to individual stanzas are to be found at the end of each stotra; the endnote numbers correspond to the stanza numbers. I have made every effort to identify antecedents of the verses, including phrases and epithets from the Sanskrit Veda, the compositions of Rāmānuja, the hymns of the Ālvārs, and the Pāñcarātra Āgamas. The stotras contain many Upaniṣadic phrases and epithets; particularly well-known phrases or epithets (especially if contained in numerous Upaniṣads) have not been identified in the notes. For the identification or explanation of Sanskrit words and the names and epithets of deities, persons, and places, the reader may refer to the Glossary.

Śrīvaikuṇṭha Stava

1

I take refuge at the feet
of my illustrious preceptor Rāmānuja
the sole ocean of compassion who
because of passionate attachment
to the gold of Acyuta's lotus-feet
eternally considers all else as straw!

2

May we resort to Vakulābharāṇa's feet --
ornaments [decorating] the heads
of the elders adept in the Three Vedas,
the eternal wealth of good people,
and an auspicious asylum
for those with no other refuge.

3

Victory to the ocean in the form of Parāṅkuṣa
the divine abode of Acyuta
who has limitless greatness,
is filled with a surging flow
of the sap of love's essence
enkindled by the fetters of
wonderful passionate feelings
arising from devotion's power,
and is a storehouse of precious jewels
[resplendent] with the riches of the Vedas.

4

I extol that Foremost Splendour
Whom [the wise] desire
for the sake of the world's great welfare

dependent upon Whom
are the heavenly abodes

Who is lotus-eyed,
without a second, knowable by Vedānta,
and beginningless!

5

May I see that Indescribable One Who
wears a golden garment
casts sidelong glances, boon-bestowing and cool
has hands reaching down to His knees
is black like a cloud
has long ears and a chest raised and broad
and is the bearer of Lakṣmī.

6

We announce the lofty status of being Viṣṇu
[with Upaniṣadic phrases such as]:
the Truth Undecaying
the One without clan or class
the Invisible One
imperceptible, indescribable, and incomparable
the Controller of this world
which is smaller than an atom.

7

I think that the Abode of Viṣṇu
which shines perpetually
on the summit of the Vedas (Upaniṣads)
and on the heads of the Lord's exalted servants

falls within the range of speech
 of even people like me
 because of [the Lord's] motherly affection
 toward those who have taken refuge with Him!

8

Though fully aware of my own [ignorance]
 I shamelessly utter words of affection
 to the feet of Viṣṇu!

No one calls the water [of a sacred river]
 impure if lapped by a dog,
 nor need the dog feel ashamed
 when overcome by thirst!

9

The magnitude of the qualities
 of the demon-destroyer God
 transcends speech and thought.

Just a tiny particle from those [qualities]
 would pacify my torment,
 [for] even a drop of water from the ocean
 is sufficient [to satisfy]
 a thirsty insect!

10

Men of ancient times
 whose ecstatic speech was tender with love
 have praised You with mellifluous words
 O Enemy of Madhu!

My lowly speech
 [seems to make] a mockery
 of their [sweet] sayings.

On the other hand,
Your forgiveness will find an object
in my harsh language!

11

Your revered commandment
known as the Three Vedas
is accepted as the valid means to knowledge
of the supra-sensual,
while other means
[such as perception and inference]
are faulty and [therefore] fallacious.

But the eternal [Triad]
is praised as flawless!

12

You are a hidden treasure for ALL people,
obtainable by the meritorious
but difficult to reach for others!

The virtuous performers of meritorious deeds
accepted the Triad in this matter,
but others
by practicing things contrary to the Vedas
have fallen down [into viewpoints]
which fail to recognize Vedic authority.

13

The evil consequence of the actions
of wicked people
is made visible [by] the wonderful sport of fate!

Alas!
Those whose minds are
steeped in wrong philosophy

even [after] having taken [into account]
 the revered Śruti
 [in the matter of deciding]
 the meaning [of words]
 are doomed!

14

What is the difference between
 those who seek out a mirage [in the desert
 in order to quench their thirst]
 and are then devoured
 by the wild animals [living there],
 and those who are fortunate enough
 [to reside] near a pond
 but are killed by crocodiles ?

Alas! [There is no difference!]

Both those who deny the authority of the Vedas
 and the followers of wrong philosophies
 derived from it
 go to limitless terrible darkness,
 [for] You do not
 cast Your glance
 on [either of] them.

15

In the very same way that an object
 may be clearly seen [only] in the sunlight,
 so those with minds made flawless
 by devotion to You
 discern the meaning of Śruti
 [using] acceptable aids
 such as logic and Smṛti
 sent forth by You
 to elucidate the Vedas.

16

Those devoid of devotion to Your lotus-feet
cannot correctly apprehend an object as it really is
[because] a [jaundiced] eye
not treated with bile-killing ointment
is unable to perceive the whiteness of a conch
even in the [sun]light.

17

We determine that You alone are the Supreme Lord
a truth disclosed by hundreds of Vedic statements
which have as their chief aim
the exposition of reality,
by the power of Smṛtis
which conform [to the Vedas],
by true Purāṇas
given to the exposition of the truth,
and by the wisdom of the knowers of the Lord.

18

Elsewhere some people accept
the popular understanding
of [the epithet] "Īśa" (lord)
and declare that [Śiva] is Lord .

They accept the Three Vedas
only in order to endow mere public opinion
with [Vedic] authority.

But with You, O Imperishable One,
the Triad is direct!

19

He Who is smaller than an atom
and greater than the great

became the Soul of [all] people
and the Generator of the worlds.

We pronounce You -- such as You are --
Supreme Lord

You Who are denoted by the syllable "A"
which is the root of the sacred syllable AUM,
the very essence of the Vedas.

20

You are the Lord of souls.
There is no Lord other than You.
You are the Overlord of the universe
and its Final Goal.

O Nārāyaṇa! O Imperishable One!
You alone are the transcendent God!
Even Brahmā and the other [gods]
have obtained their very existence
by Your glance.

21

You are the Eternal One,
without equal or superior,
Exalted Glory,
the Ancient Man
 living in the eternal and undecaying heaven,
the Generator of life,
and the Ground of this world.

O Supporter of the earth!
The Vedas celebrate You alone!

22

You are that thousand-headed man
Whom they call the Lord

of past, present and future,
and the One having no ruler [over Him].

Your abode is on the ocean,
Your forms are limitless,
and Your Queen is Lakṣmī
Mother of the three worlds.

23
In conformity with all the Śrutis,
Puruṣa Sūkta
which is the purifier of the whole world
and faultless like You
described You
Who are steadfast, unshakeable,
and the bearer of the title of Nārāyaṇa
as Supreme Person and Lord.

24
That lordly bliss which [Śruti] has described
as hundred-fold in sequential order
[is comparable] to Your own [bliss]
only if finally multiplied
beyond [the range of] speech and mind.

You, the Lotus-eyed One
and the Person in the Sun,
are here among the people as
the Inner Soul!

25
That which is regarded as
the root cause [of all things] --
and is known
in the [Upaniṣadic] statements on creation
as "Brahman" or "Sat"

by the word Ātman, or as Tat --
Mahopaniṣad proclaims to be
 Nārāyaṇa.

[Other Upaniṣads] beginning with *Subāla*
 have also followed this [same tradition].

26

What is understood in the Śrutis as
 the Supreme Light
 the Highest Truth
 the Supreme Soul
 Brahman
 and the Highest Entity
 one Upaniṣad calls "Nārāyaṇa"
 and another "the supreme status of Viṣṇu".

27

Thus thousands of Upaniṣadic statements
 proclaim Your supreme essential lordship.

Moreover, while traversing the worlds
 swallowing them
 and spitting them out again,
 You didn't even take notice
 of the difference between
 a [tiny] insect and [the great lord] Brahmā!

28

The wise ones determine Your essential lordship
 by the glory of Your form
 by Your Supreme Abode
 by some of Your wonderful, appropriate deeds
 and by other undisputed marks
 [indicative of Your supremacy].

29

It is [well-known] to all people
 that she whose sidelong glance
 perpetually determines the sovereignty
 of lords [like Brahmā and Śiva]
 is [named] Śrī.

People of eloquent speech
 derive the etymology [of the name Śrī
 from the fact that]
 she has taken refuge with You,
 and call You the *śrī* of Śrī!

30

Despite the existence of Śruti,
 on account of their adamant and baseless logic,
 some skeptics become deaf toward You
 because of *māyā*'s power.

That *māyā* created by You out of the three *guṇas* --
 what amusement does it not provide for You,
 O All-Pervading One?

31

O Storehouse of eternal, blemishless, spotless,
 changeless, auspicious, true qualities!

These [deaf ones] have said
 that You are constantly being born variously
 in [the form of] inanimate objects
 and worms, butterflies, elephants
 and other [creatures]!

32

This entire universe is manifested
because of Your glance
and were You not to cast Your glance
it would not appear at all.

It desires Your glance
in order to remain [in existence].

Thus in Śruti You alone
are referred to as the "world".

33

O Lord!
Śruti has decreed Your sovereignty such that
the name -- like the form --
of all things moving and non-moving
is dependent upon You alone.

Alas!
For sinners
this is a cause of delusion
regarding You!

34

Various [people] who are
even slight and momentary
recipients even of a fraction of Your glance
have acquired a dominion
[otherwise] unobtainable by humans.

Whichever [gods] have spoken of
Your Supreme essential lordliness
[are themselves called lords] in the Śrutis
on account of their association
with Your glory.

35

Some deluded ones think that
the variety of eternal things
is by its essential nature
independent of You
and so they speak of Your sovereignty as limited.

But the Three Vedas declare
Your dominion uncircumscribed!

36

All things exist
because of Your will alone.

Some things
forever dear to You
are eternal.

[Among these] eternal Your auspicious qualities
are indeed a [good] example for us
[because] it is certain that
their inherent nature is one of
eternal dependence on You alone.

37

You are not only
the Cause of this universe
comprised of sentient beings (*cit*)
and insentient objects (*acit*),
O Imperishable One,
but also its Effect!

[Thus] the Upaniṣads forcefully proclaim
Your immutability
[as the quality] which reveals
the limitlessness of Your essential lordliness.

38

Those who understand [the meaning of] Śruti
know that Your divine glory is incomprehensible
without indulging in unfounded arguments
[which include such questions as]:

“With what instrument?
staying where?
taking what [as the material]?
and to what end
does the Lord create all this?”

39

The Cosmic Egg
covered by the seven elements
is the abode of the fourteen worlds
and of Śiva and Brahmā;
hundreds of eggs like that one
each subsequent one ten times [larger]
than the one before
have become [mere] playthings
for Your sport!

40

Created by Your own will for Your action of sport,
these [eggs] represent
a minuscule fraction of an iota of Your glory.

Your Supreme Eternal Realm
is ever changeless
and transcends time.

41

That which [the wise ones] describe as
the Supreme Abode of Viṣṇu
or the Sky beyond darkness
which is lustre-filled

composed of the highest *sattva*
 eternal
 the Ground of all Bliss
 and very beautiful and wonderful
 they also proclaim as
 Your Abode called Vaikuṇṭha.

42

That eternal [place]
 difficult to reach even for [gods]
 such as Brahmā, Śiva and Indra
 or for Sanaka and others
 who delight in renunciation,
 which some [devotees] desire
 as the resplendent [state of] union with the Lord,
 which is directly perceptible [by liberated souls]
 and is the most highly revered of all places,
 [the wise ones] proclaim as
 Your Abode called Vaikuṇṭha.

43

Phrases such as “with form”
 “with multitudes of true qualities”
 “with noble and sweet thoughts”
 “with greatness” and “with the highest wealth”
 when used to describe [the Eternal Realm as being]
 “like this” [or] “like that”
 show disrespect for the glory [of Vaikuṇṭha].

44

On account of the greatness of that which is
 eternal and unacquainted with changes
 like growth, decay and destruction,
 the fruit of ritual actions
 -- impermanent and resulting in sorrow --
 is mentioned in the Śrutis as insignificant.

45

That [place] which can be reached
 by the pure,
 by those who have transcended changes
 like birth and old age,
 by those who possess
 the wealth of abundant devotion,
 and by those who are not attached
 to worldly existence,
 and cannot even be imagined
 by other less-fortunate ones,
 [the wise ones] proclaim as
 Your Abode called Vaikunṭha!

46

The supreme greatness
 of Your limitless Eternal Realm
 is established as independent
 of anyone other than You.

Multitudes of qualities
 beginning with knowledge
 have crossed beyond all limits!

Your beloved Lakṣmī
 and Your important attendants
 such as the king of the birds (Garuḍa)
 [dwell there].

47

Your countless, limitless, true auspicious qualities
 are such that even if one were to possess
 a minuscule fraction of a bit
 of a single quality from among them,
 the resultant glory would transcend
 speech and mind.

Yet You are One Whose glory is
independent [of these qualities]!

48

[People who are considered great are judged so]
on account of their qualities.

Some gain respect
because of worldly power.

O All-pervading One,
with You it is precisely the contrary!

Your power and qualities attain auspiciousness
on account of their association with You!

49

The Three Vedas declare You to be
without qualities
because You are untouched by
the material constituents
of purity, passion, and ignorance.

O Hari!
They proclaim You
the Supreme Lord of lords
because You are an Eternal Ocean
of all true qualities!

50

They say that knowledge itself
is Your essential nature
and also that knowledge is Your attribute
in the same way that a gem made of lustres
has lustre itself as its quality.

Therefore, [having knowledge as a quality],
 You perceive the entire universe directly,
 and its protection is accomplished
 solely by means of Your glance.

51

By declaring in sequential order
 “Those which are one hundred [times bliss]...”
 the Three Vedas attempted to delimit Your bliss
 which is augmented by
 streams of Your qualities
 beginning with youthfulness.

Ultimately they proclaimed [Your bliss] to be
 beyond the range of speech and mind!

52

Thus the ingenious [Triad] declared that
 the great majesty of all Your limitless glories
 along with all Your auspicious qualities
 beginning with youthfulness
 is beyond the range of speech.

53

Oh! What a wonder!
 By Your wonderful action
 at the time of the dissolution [of the worlds],
 controlling according to its appropriate merits
 the entire undifferentiated [universe]
 which was ignorant
 and without knowledge of past experience,
 You instantaneously effected its reappearance
 by Your vow to glance [in its direction] at once,
 [causing it to become] differentiated
 from a [tiny] insect
 clear up to [the great lord] Brahmā.

54

Such is Your limitless lordly power that
 with that selfsame glance
 You set in motion the wonderful universe
 which ever moves toward appearance
 growth, decay, and dissolution
 [and is differentiated by]
 moving beings and non-moving things
 and also lords and beggars!

55

Since You are able to create the universe
 destroy it, change it, make it non-existent
 and determine change as to its form and nature,
 why do You take into account the law of *karma*
 [when the wise ones] declare
 Your lordly autonomy indisputable?

56

They speak of Your splendour as darkening
 the brightness of the thousand-rayed [sun]
 which collects together [its rays]
 at the time of dissolution [of the universe].

Your perpetually playful and ravishing brilliance
 is ever well-disposed
 toward those well-disposed to You
 and is terrifying to [all] others!

57

[All] creatures are dependent upon Your glance
 for their very existence,
 so You are already the possessor of everything!

I [can't] imagine another
 as munificent as You!

You [Yourself] are the temple of Indirā
 [the Goddess of Wealth]
 so where is the need
 to speak of Your riches?

58

Just look!

Seeking to uplift the creature
 who seeks to drown in the sorrows
 caused by sins arising from latent impressions
 [resulting] from birth after birth
 in this beginningless transitory existence,
 solely out of compassion
 You have prescribed in the Śāstras
 [the means for] the expiation of those sins.

59

The spiritual well-being
 which You fashion for Your creatures
 by the eternal Śāstras
 by Smṛtis
 by the deeds of Your divine incarnations
 and by Your auspicious glance
 is a wealth of bounding billows
 belonging to the Most Excellent Ocean
 that is Your compassion!

60

Oh! Alas! Do tell [me]!

What is this sin of inconceivable potency
 incessantly and constantly present in creatures
 who have not fashioned for themselves
 a fortunate destiny
 that causes them to cross beyond

the ocean of Your compassion
 [even though] it sports in overflowing
 its proper boundaries.

61

Here [in this transitory world]
 a creature commits in half a moment
 sin [the effect of which is] inexhaustible
 even after the experience [of suffering]
 lasting for millions of eons.

Ah! How wonderful it is
 that You always forgive such a sinner
 in all [sorts of] births
 solely because of a mere intention to stop [sinning].

62

How could so great a forgiveness fail
 toward those who have a protective armour
 in the form of hands folded
 in supplication to You?

And how can Your forgiveness
 be regarded as an auspicious quality
 [when it proceeds] on its own
 without distinction
 toward all creatures zealously eager
 for Your motherly affection?

63

When You [heard] the trumpeting
 of the best among elephants [Gajendra],
 You Who created the universe by a mere thought
 caused it to flourish,
 and then desired to destroy it,

wanted to come [to him]
and stroke his foot!

What do You mean by surrendering
to such [feelings of] motherly affection ?

64

Oh how wonderful!

If any creature in this transitory existence
might worship the Lord ever so slightly
with an undivided mind,
You accept him on par with Garuḍa
even without knowing that
“He is [like] this,
He is endowed with such-and-such qualities,
He is thus-and-so”!

65

You bestow upon those who have resorted to You
form and qualities such as glory
that are equal to Your own.

Some therefore say that liberation is
identity with You.

[But] in the highest considered opinion
of the learned
liberation is only
servitude to You!

66

Be that as it may!
Oh, what [a wonder that
You take on] the nature and qualities

in whatever kinds and amounts they might be
of whomsoever resorts to You.

With Your conduct dependent on [Your devotee
and becoming] similar in qualities with him,
You embrace him!

67

O God! For a hundred autumns
may we see You like this --
resembling a mountain of black collyrium
having a prominent and attractive nose
long eyes, long-stretching ears
victorious arms [reaching down] to the knees
a chest [decorated] with the śrīvatsa mark
and a navel broad and deep.

68

We praise this golden-cloth clad body
which has lotus-eyes and lotus-feet
delightful finger-tips lovely like red lotuses
hair curls resembling [swarms of] bees
and a body-complexion [the colour] of black bees.

69

When will You favour me with
the amorous play of Your eyebrows
Your tender, cooling glance and gentle smile
Your speech [filled] with sweet syllables
and Your lotus-face
blossoming forth with fervent love?

70

When will Your pair of lotus-feet
with the marks of the thunderbolt, goad,

banner, lotus, conch, discus, female fish,
 pot of nectar and desire-yielding tree
 anoint my head once again
 with light spreading forth?

71

When will Your lotus-foot
 which in the strides of Trivikrama
 traversed the three worlds,
 which is is a head ornament
 for those having unsurpassed devotion
 and eternal wealth to me,
 agree to [take its place upon]
 my head for a long time ?

72

Ah! When will You fulfill my desires
 by placing on my head
 the fine and tender young leaf of Your hand
 which resembles a veined lotus
 and is similar to a lotus
 with fully-bloomed petals
 so delightful to the senses ?

73

Ah! The natural beauty of Your body alone
 is ever enough!

Even then there is more [to be enjoyed]!

[Your natural beauty] enhanced by
 [the loveliness of] Your ornaments
 becomes too much [to bear]!

Your abundant splendour in its entirety!
 Oh! [How can I speak about that ?]

74

With unblinking eyes let me see You shining
 with the *śrīvatsa* [mark], *kaustubha* jewel,
 crown and forehead mark,
 with an armlet, a garland, and a bracelet of gold,
 with an extraordinary necklace, jewelled anklets,
 and with the knot of Your garment
 [tied around Your waist]!

75

Your lovely complexion is like a blue lotus
 in some parts
 and like a white lotus in others,
 [silver] like the moonlight
 in some places
 and golden [like the sun] in others.

Bearing the beauty mutually,
 [each part is enhanced] by the other.

When can my eyes
 feast on You ?

76

With my hands folded in supplication to You
 and with wide-open eyelids
 may I enjoy You Who
 with conch and discus
 mace, sword, and bow [in Your hands]
 reside along with the divine Śrī
 on the enjoyable Serpent Couch,
 waited upon by Garuḍa, Viṣvaksena,
 and Your other attendants.

77

May I be united with Your attendants
 my celestial masters, the eternally free [souls]
 who forever delight in Your service,
 for whom You are the sole object of enjoyment,
 and whose hearts are forever melted
 with the sentiments [of love] fresh each moment,
 each one ever regarding the other as superior!

78

Whatever is resplendent here [in this world]
 they call by the term "śrī"
 [yet] beauty and splendour
 are only an infinitesimal part
 of [Your consort Śrī's] greatness.

[Learned people] indeed declare that
 she whom they call by the name of Śrī
 and whose dwelling-place they declare You to be
 is [herself] the attainment
 of those engaged in [spiritual] striving.

79

She whom You obtained through Your exertion
 in the churning of the ocean
 and because of whose disappearance [as Sītā]
 You set out to destroy the world
 delights You always with deep feelings
 which have a continuous flow of
 the extraordinary sentiment [of love]
 each and every moment!

80

May I, who approached You
 with a feeling of exaltation
 [at being in Your presence]

serve You and Śrī, the Sovereign [of the universe]
 who forever resembles You
 with the splendour of her beauty
 with her multitude of qualities
 with her majesty and glory
 with her noble and sweet sentiments
 and with her attractive actions.

81

Let these nights end for me
 who am interested [solely] in serving You,
 my Father [Viṣṇu],
 along with my Mother [Kṣamā]
 who is the sustainer of the universe
 consisting of moving and non-moving things,
 the supporter of the world,
 and forbearance (*kṣamā*) itself
 by her supreme forgiveness.

82

May that exceedingly noble Nīlā accept me,
 who with the sweetness of her feelings
 with her various graceful movements
 with the amorous play of her eyebrows
 and her smile and sidelong glances
 is one with You
 and You are
 one with her!

83

Having moment by moment
 delighted the goddesses
 with deep feelings mixed with [love's]
 extraordinary, wonderful
 and ever fresh sentiments,

You properly honour Your servants
accompanied by their appropriate retinue.

May I be near to You, O Lord!

84

Alas! Alas!
I am doomed, I am wicked!
Fie upon me!

What have I said,
falling into delusion ?

Oh! How can a sinner like me
deserve even so much as to remember You
Who are the abode of auspicious qualities
untouched by defects ?

85

Even after having forcibly conquered sin
purified the mind
shaken off all inauspiciousness
persisting from birth
and imbibed multitudes of true auspicious qualities,
still I am unworthy of Your feet
because [in spite of all this]
I have been submerged in this [sinfulness]
for a [too] long time!

86

But on the other hand,
what do I know [about Your mercy]!
You accept what is inauspicious [in Your devotees]
as if there is nothing preferable,
[solely] because of their association with You.

If You accept an individual thus,
then there is none worthier than he!

87

Because we did not become
the target of Your glances
we have fallen into the whirlpool of *samsāra* !

How can those such as we --
who have incessantly committed
thousands of sins in [a multitude of] births --
be worthy of Your compassion ?

88

I have not at all accumulated [merit
based on] good deeds,
nor have I flawless knowledge;
moveover, I am bereft of devotion
to Your revered lotus-feet!

O Lord!
I am an [empty] vessel
fit [to be filled with] Your compassion!

89

What is the use of all this prattling?

Hundreds of thousands of times
I have committed thoroughly
every single [deed] that can be called a sin
whether great or small
intentionally or unintentionally!

By Your compassion, please forgive me
[for] I have no recourse other [than You]!

90

Alas! O God!
 Even though I have been accepted
 by Rāmānuja the Noble --
 who is a master in the love of Your feet --
 delusion regarding sensual attachments
 overpowers me again [and again]!

Where else here [in this transitory existence]
 can You find so powerful a *karma* as mine?

91

Having pondered over
 the thousands of births
 of all creatures great or small,
 and with a body tormented
 at being excessively pressed
 in the womb [of birth after birth],
 I wander about here [in *samsāra*]
 without any cure and struck down!

92

And furthermore,
 having experienced over and over again
 indescribable sorrows [arising]
 at the times of [my many] births,
 and knowing nothing over and above grief,
 I am foolish because of childishness!
 [And yet] I [continue to] commit further deeds
 which result in misery [for me] in the next world!

93

Having experienced yet another sorrow
 under the delusion that it is joy,
 and approaching once again

great and manifold miseries,
 I honour even the slightest, most insignificant
 and despicable sorrow-mixed pleasure as happiness
 even though its consequence is grief.

94

Led on wrong paths by horses
 in the form of sense organs which tempt me,
 I am being churned by
 repugnant and unobtainable desires!

My mind mad with the pride of learning,
 wealth, and birth in a good family,
 [and filled] with desire, and anger,
 I am unable to advance toward Final Emancipation!

95

Alas!
 My thirst for desired but difficult-to-obtain objects
 grows a thousand-fold!

[But whether] I am able to get what I long for
 or whether obstacles prevent it,
 the ever increasing craving
 still does not subside!

96

I have neither faith nor devotion,
 neither the strength nor the desire
 to recite [Your names]
 sing Your praises
 honour You
 or meditate upon You.

I have a mind unrepentant for duties left undone.

But woe is me! What abundant assistance there is
on the opposite side!

97

My unbounded and incorrigible wickedness
is well-known by this indeed,

O Lord;

I am unworthy of even a [single] breeze
wafting out from the nectar-waves
of [the ocean of Your]
great and limitless compassion!

98

O Master!

Beginning with lordliness and valour,
compassion, dignity, forgiveness,
and especially unconditional kindheartedness,
all Your auspicious qualities
have attained their object
after reaching me
[a man] full of limitless, terrible sins,
doomed and with no resort other [than You]!

99

Although it is [a sign of] Your greatness
that You protect all these various individuals
who are qualified in the ways
of taking shelter at Your feet,
as well as those who have endeavoured to perform
all the [appropriate] injunctions,
it would be insufficient [on Your part]
if You did not protect me,
[for] unlike these others
I have no resort other [than You]!

100

Without You people can obtain neither
the qualification to perform their [ritual] duties
nor the will to perform them exhaustively.

Thus [in Your eyes]
there is no difference
between them and me
[for we are all dependent on You]!

101

If it is a binding rule,
O Bestower of Boons,
that You protect
those who follow all [the Śāstraic] injunctions
and not the others,
then You alone [should] grant me the power,
qualification, will, removal of obstacles,
and all else [that I need]!

NOTES

- 1 This stanza has become the official *guru-paramparā* (lineage of Ācāryas) verse in praise of Rāmānuja. As such, it is recited by all Śrīvaiṣṇavas, whether Teṅkalais (Southern School) or Vaṭakalais (Northern School).
- 5 References to the Lord's and Śrī's "sidelong glance" (*ikṣaṇa* or *katākṣa*) abound in Śrīvaiṣṇava praise-poems. Regarded in both Sanskrit and Tamilian culture as the "look of love", God's sidelong glance -- a glance from the corner of His eye -- connotes the passionate nature of His relationship with His devotees (as their Beloved), as well as the power of His glance. A straightforward glance or direct gaze would overwhelm the devotee.

This verse mentions several *mahā-puruṣa-lakṣaṇas*, or signs of a great man: long arms reaching to the knees, long ears, a broad chest, and so forth.

- Viṣṇu is frequently referred to as “the bearer of Lakṣmī” (Lakṣmīdhara), synonymous with His better-known name Śrīdhara. Theologically, this name is particularly significant for Śrīvaiṣṇavas: “Just as the gem bears its lustre, and the flower its fragrance... Viṣṇu bears Lakṣmī by an inherent [eternal] relationship” (see Bhaṭṭar, BhGD, No. 617).
- 6 “clan” (*gotra*), “class” (*varṇa*).
- 8 “the water [of a sacred river]” (*tīrtham*). The word “river” is implied in the verse due to the fact that other forms of water (such as water in a pot) would, indeed, become impure if licked by a dog.
- 9 “Of the demon-destroyer god” (*devasya daitya-mathanasya*) refers to Viṣṇu, Who is well-known as Madhujit and Madhusudhana. For an extended etymological explanation of these epithets referring to Viṣṇu’s role as the destroyer of demons, see Bhaṭṭar, BhGD, No. 210.
- 11 Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy recognizes three means to valid knowledge: perception, inference, and verbal (primarily scriptural) testimony. Because Viṣṇu’s Supreme Heaven transcends perception by the senses, the Vedas alone (referred to here as *trayī* or Triad) can give us knowledge of it.
- 13 PSV notes the following concerning “the meaning of words”: Nyāya teaches that a sentence carries meaning over and above the meanings of its individual words. The significance in the context of this verse is that some people accept Śruti in principle, and discern the meaning of its individual words, but interpret its overall meaning wrongly; that is, they accept Śruti but not its overall meaning that Viṣṇu is the Supreme God.
- 14 “Limitless terrible darkness” (*apāraṁ ghoram tamas*) is a poetic expression for hell (*naraka*), “a place of torment for the wicked where souls go before being reborn” (M-W, 520).

- 15 In this verse and v. 16, Kūreśa clearly follows his Ācārya Rāmānuja's teaching on the relationship between devotion and knowledge. See Rāmānuja, VS, para.144.

- 16 This verse is a continuation of v. 15.

In this stanza, Kūreśa enunciates the view of his Ācārya Rāmānuja called *satkhyātivāda*, or the theory of reality-apprehension. Rāmānuja reduces all the other five theories of perception (including *akhyāti* or non-apprehension, *ātmakhyāti*, or self-perception, *anirvācaniya-khāyati*, or indefinable perception, *anyathakhāyati*, or misperception, and *asatkhyāti* or non-being's perception) to two: an object which is manifest to consciousness through perception either corresponds completely to the thing as it is in reality (*yathārtha*) or it does not. Rāmānuja's ŚrīBh deals with a number of exceptions which apparently contradict this realistic theory of perception, one being the yellow appearance of white things to the jaundiced eye: "But in the (perception of the) yellow conch and other such things (by the jaundiced eye), the ocular rays combined with the bilious substance existing in the eye, are brought into association with the conch and other such things. The whiteness belonging to the conch is not apprehended, because it is overpowered by the yellow colour belonging to the bile. Hence, as in the case of the conch-shell covered with gold, there is a perception that the conch is yellow. The bilious substance, and the yellow colour belonging to it, are very subtle and are not therefore apprehended by the bystanders. But, by him who is (thus) afflicted with biliousness, they are, though subtle, apprehended well, because they have proceeded from his own eyes...." (ŚrīBh I.1.1.1, p.167). This and all other excerpts from ŚrīBh are based on the translation by M. Rangacharya and M.B. Varadaraja Iyengar, unless otherwise indicated.

In this verse, Kūreśa, following Rāmānuja, links "the apprehension or knowledge of the thing as it is" (*yathārtha-bodha*) with devotion to the lotus-feet of the Lord (*aṅghri-sarasi-ruha-bhakti*). Devotion, which is likened to a bile-killing ointment, is the remedy for faulty apprehension.

- 17 Vs. 17-20 have as their object the praise of Viṣṇu's supreme lordship over all of creation.
- 18 "Lord" (Īśa) is popularly regarded as an epithet of Śiva. According to Kūreśa's verse, people who accept this understanding then go to the Vedas, and finding the name Īśa there, claim that the Vedas conclude that Śiva is the Supreme Lord. The Vedas are thereby used to legitimize what is mere popular opinion. But in the case of Viṣṇu, the Triad is direct (*sammukinā*, lit. "face-to-face").
- 19 "Smaller than an atom" (*aṇoraṇu-taraḥ*) and "greater than the great" (*mahataḥ mahīyān*) is taken from KUp 1.2.20: "this person, kept in the cave [of the heart], is even smaller than an atom (*aṇoraṇīyān*), and the great among the great" (*mahatomahīyān*).

This same Upaniṣadic passage was adapted by Tirumalīcai Ālvār in *Tiruccantaviruttam*, v. 109: "There is none to make You small, but You became smaller, none to make You big, but You become bigger...O God of gods! The sages praise You thus, and I praise you also" (translation by K.K.A. Venkatachari).

- "Expressable by the syllable 'A' which is the root of the sacred syllable AUM". Kūreśa's interpretation is based on Rāmānuja, who "argues the supremacy of Nārāyaṇa on the basis of His being denoted by the letter 'A', which is the root of the sacred syllable Aum" (Carman 1981:165).
- 20 The issue in vs. 20-24 is Viṣṇu's supreme lordship over all other gods.
- 22 "Thousand-headed man" (*puruṣaḥ...sahasra-mūrdhā*) is based on PuSū (*sahasra-śīrṣa*). See Bhaṭṭar, BhGD, No. 226.
- "Lord of past, present and future" (*bhūta-bhavya-bhavad-īśam*) is based on KUp II.1.5: "Lord of past and future" (*īśānam bhūta-bhavyasya*). See also Bhaṭṭar, BhGD, No. 291.
- "Queen" (*mahiṣī*) is a term used for the Chief Queen, that is, the first or consecrated wife of a king.
- 24 Kūreśa follows Rāmānuja's interpretation in this stanza. "Bliss (*ānanda*) multiplied beyond [the range of] speech and mind" is based on TaittUp I.9.1. Rāmānuja argues that this

Upaniṣadic passage “proceeds to give a definite measurement of the excellence of the Bliss of the Brahman in that order in which each succeeding bliss is a hundred fold of the bliss (immediately preceding it); and then speech and mind return from Him (without attaining Him) on account of that (Bliss) being incapable of (such) definite measurement”. According to Rāmānuja, “*ānandamaya* (or That which consists of Bliss) is different from the individual self, who is capable of existing in both the states of bondage and final release” (ŚrīBh I.1.7.17).

“Inner Soul” (*antarātma*) is a reference to God as *antar-yāmin*, “Indweller” or the “Soul of the soul”; “Person in the Sun” (*puṣaḥ pauṣṇaḥ*, lit. solar person). Both references are from TaittUp I.8.5: “He Who is in [the heart of] a human being (*puṣe*) and He Who is in the Sun (*āditye*) are one and the same”.

- 25 The pattern for the use of proof texts in this verse is based on Rāmānuja, who quotes a number of Upaniṣadic passages referring to Brahman, and then states: “By means of these and other similar passages, it is made out that Nārāyaṇa Himself, the Lord of all the lords, is the supreme cause. The words ‘Sat’ (existence), ‘Brahman’, ‘Ātman’, which are all found mentioned in similar contexts, are particularized by the word ‘Nārāyaṇa’ occurring in a context similar (to the other above-stated contexts), and they reveal Him alone” (ŚrīBh II.1.6.15).

SuUp is an important proof text for Rāmānuja. The passages which he quotes from the text often are those which name Nārāyaṇa. (See, for example, ŚrīBh I.1.1.1 and II.1.3.9, and BhGBh XII.2).

- 26 “The Supreme Light” (*jyotiḥ param*), “the Highest Truth” (*parama-tattvam*), “the Supreme Soul” (*parātmā*) and “Brahman” are all called “Nārāyaṇa” in MaNārUp.

Viṣṇoḥ padarūpam paramam may denote either the Supreme Brahman Himself or His Supreme Abode of Vaikuṇṭha according to Rāmānuja.

- 27 In this verse, Kūreṣa states that the supreme lordship of Viṣṇu, proclaimed in the Upaniṣads, is evident in His incarnations as well.

The words “traversing the worlds” refer to the three steps taken by Viṣṇu’s incarnation as Vāmana the dwarf.

The act of Viṣṇu’s swallowing the worlds and spitting them out again is referred to by the Ālvārs a total of 135 times. It occurs in the poems of all the Ālvārs except Toṇṭaraṭipoti’s, and is one of the most frequently referred to episodes in DP (Ate 1978:380-81).

- 28 PSV glosses “other undisputed marks” of Viṣṇu with such phrases as: the quality of being the husband of Lakṣmī (*lakṣmī-patitva*), the quality of reclining on [Ādi]śeṣa (*śeṣa-sāyitva*), and the quality of having Garuḍa as vehicle (*vainateya-vāhanatva*).

- 29 This verse is connected with the immediately preceding ones in that *śrī-patitva*, or the quality of being the husband of Śrī, is important for establishing the supremacy of the Lord. While Śrī obtains her high status as a result of her having taken refuge with Viṣṇu, the position of this stanza in the group declaring the Lord’s supremacy (vs. 17-29) implies the reverse as well. According to Śrīvaiṣṇava theology, Śrī is one of the marks of the Lord’s supremacy. For a history of the concept of *śrī-patitva*, see Nayar 1992:229-32.

Kūreśa says that the Goddess is named Śrī “because she has taken refuge with [Viṣṇu]”. According to this interpretation, the name Śrī is derived from the Ātmanepada or passive form of the verbal root *śri* meaning “to lean on, rest on...cling to, be supported or fixed or depend on...to go to, approach, resort or have recourse to (for help or refuge)....” (M-W, 1098). The name Śrī may also be derived from the verbal root *śrī* meaning “to diffuse light, beauty, grace, loveliness, welfare, good fortune...auspiciousness ...wealth, treasure, etc.” (M-W, 1098).

“People of eloquent speech” are Vālmiki, Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, and Yāmuna. See “*śrī* of Śrī” in the Glossary.

For other examples of word-play on the name Śrī, see ŚS, v. 7, SBS, v. 9 and 69, ŚRRS I, v. 66, and ŚGRK, vs. 12 and 29.

For a complete discussion of the five etymological derivations of the epithet Śrī as found in Pāñcarātra, see Vedānta Deśika, ŚrīRTS, pp.427-36.

- 30 “skeptics” (*kautskutāḥ*) , lit. “those who ask why? how?”. PSV glosses the word with *kutaḥ kutāḥ iti vadantāḥ*.
- 31 This verse and the following one (v. 32) are concerned with the philosophical statement implying the identity of the world and Brahman. V. 31 sets out the understanding of several philosophical schools, and v. 32 refutes that interpretation by stating why certain of the Upaniṣads appear to speak of Brahman as *jagat* or “world”. Rāmānuja states that “It is the Brahman Himself, having all the intelligent and non-intelligent things for His body, Who is denoted by the word *jagat*” in ŚrīBh II.1.6.25.

The imagery found throughout these praise-poems which describes the world as being manifested on account of the glance of the Lord appears to be a poetic rendering of Rāmānuja’s understanding of the complete dependency of the world on God.

- 33 Name and form in Advaita Vedanta are restricted to the ultimately unreal realm of empirical existence, and are caused by (that is, are dependent on) *māyā*. According to Rāmānuja, however, name and form are dependent on the Lord and, in fact, “are not limited to objects in the phenomenal world but are part of the distinctive nature of all entities, including the Supreme Entity, God Himself” (Carman 1981: 158).

Note Kūreśa’s sarcastic humor: the Advaitic belief that *nāma-rūpa* is dependent on *māyā* alone is ITSELF a delusion. Kūreśa says that the Advaitins themselves are deluded concerning the truth that *nāma-rūpa* is dependent on the Lord!

- 34 Kūreśa explains the secondary meaning (*aupacārika*) of the words “lordliness” (*aiśvaryam*) and “supreme lordship” (*parama-īśitṛtvam*) in this verse. Those who are in some way associated with the Lord share in His quality of lordliness.
- 35 According to Kūreśa and Rāmānuja, souls are eternal entities and are dependent on the Lord, whereas the Nyāyikas say that only the five elements (*pañca-mahā-bhūta*) are eternal, and God creates all else.

- 36 According to Rāmānuja's philosophy, an entity can be both eternal AND dependent on the Lord. Kūreśa attempts to reconcile this apparent contradiction by an analogy: the Lord's auspicious qualities are both eternal and dependent.
- 37 "The [three-fold] Cause of the universe" is a reference to the Lord as the material, instrumental, and co-operant cause of the universe, according to the philosophy of Rāmānuja.
- 40 This verse introduces the topic of Vaikuṇṭha. Verses 41-45, meant to be read together, describe the Supreme Heaven.
- 42 "the resplendent [state of] union with the Lord" (*sāyujyam ujjvalam*).
- Śrīvaiṣṇavas recognize several degrees of liberation. Only *sāyujya* is the fullest possible union with the Lord.
- 43 Kūreśa has attempted to describe Vaikuṇṭha in several of the previous verses, but here he retreats from being able to adequately describe it.
- 44 The ritual actions referred to in this verse are those performed for desired fruits such as wealth or heaven. Śrīvaiṣṇavas regard these *kāmya* rituals as inferior because of the temporary nature of their fruits.
- 45 Five categories of souls are mentioned here: (1) "the pure", or the eternally-free souls (*nityas*); (2) "those who have transcended changes like birth and old age", or the liberated souls (*muktas*); (3) "those who possess the wealth of great devotion", or the Lord's devotees on earth (*bhaktas*); (4) "those who are not attached to worldly existence", or those desirous of liberation (*mumukṣus*); and (5) "other less fortunate persons", which refers to all others.
- 51 "Those which are one hundred [times bliss]..." (*te ye śatam*) is a quotation from TaittUp 2.8: *te ye śatam...te ye śatam*. See also SBS, v. 32.
- 55 "law of *karma*" (*svabhāva-niyamam*, lit. "the law of nature").
- 58 "[Means for the] expiation of that sin" (*duṣkṛtasya niṣkṛtim*) refers to the ritual of repentance and confession (*prayaścitta*) prescribed by the Śāstras and the Pāñcarātra Āgamas.
- 62 This verse is less a statement on the qualities of the Lord according to the understanding of the philosophers than an

expression of intimacy which, in the compositions of Kūreśa, often takes the form of teasing and bantering.

66 The topic of this verse is God's incarnations. Compare with Rāmānuja, BhGBh 4:11, and see especially the explication of this passage in Young 1989.

67 "For a hundred autumns", a Vedic phrase indicating a very long time, is frequently found in these praise-poems. The Indian autumn, the pleasantest of seasons, noted for its clean, clear air, is identified with clear-sightedness.

The description of the Lord in this verse contains several "signs of a great person" (*mahā-puruṣa-lakṣaṇa*).

74 "with unblinking eyes" (*animeṣam*, lit. "unblinkingly/unwinkingly"). The idea expressed by this word is that the loveliness of the Lord is so attractive that not a moment should be lost in the visual enjoyment of His beauty.

Similar listings of the Lord's ornaments are found in the writings of both Yāmuna and Rāmānuja. Compare with SR, v. 36, BhGBh 4.34, and VaiGad, para. 5.

78 Verses 78-80 are to be read together. For word-play on the name "Śrī", see n. 29.

80 The ordering of the three consorts Śrī, Bhūmi (Kṣamā), and Nīlā -- as it appears in vs. 80-82 -- shows that at least by the time of Kūreśa, Kṛṣṇa's cowherdess wife Nappinnai had been integrated into Sanskrit literature as Nīlā. See, for example, Poykai Ālvār, MTA, v. 42 in which the same ordering occurs "Śrī and Bhū and the cowherdess girl" (*tirumakaḷum maṇmakaḷum āymakaḷum*).

84 "The abode (or seat) of auspicious qualities untouched by all defects" (*maṅgala-guṇa-āspadam asta-heyam*) is clearly Kūreśa's adaptation of one of Rāmānuja's famous and frequently used phrases. Compare with BhGBh 4.34: "O sole seat of auspicious qualities untouched by all defects" (*nikhila-heyā-pratyanika-kalyāṇa-ekātane*). Similar phrases occur throughout Kūreśa's stotras.

87 It is a commonly held Hindu belief that if at the time of birth the Lord's glance falls on a person, (s)he will have the desire for liberation.

88 It is not clear in the Sanskrit text whether the last line of this stanza is an exclamation or a question.

- 91 Vs. 91-95 describe the unbearableness of worldly miseries. Kūreśa's description of life in the womb is based on the Purāṇas. Contrary to Freudian thought, which views the womb as a place of contentment to which one might wish to return, the Purāṇas describe it as a place of great suffering. See, for example, VP VI.5.11-16: "The tender embryo, surrounded by great filth, floating in water, distorted in its back, neck, and limbs, endures severe pain in the course of its development....unable to extend or contract its limbs...."
- 94 "By/with horses in the form of sense organs" (*indriya-hayaiḥ*) is imagery based on KUp 3.3-6, esp. 4: "the senses, they say, are horses" (*indriyāni hayānāhuḥ*).

Atimānuṣa Stava

1

I choose [as my subject of praise]
the occasional incarnations of Viṣṇu
Who has far surpassed all comparison
with all ordinary people
by His superhuman character, conduct,
and activities,
and by His power, and valour
exceeding [even] the gods!

2

May the light rays resembling
a stream of honey-nectar
flowing out from the lotus-feet
of the One Who dwells
in auspiciousness-granting Raṅgam,
born of those [feet]
known from Śruti to be “a fountain of honey”,
bestow [on us] the auspiciousness
of [Viṣṇu's] Supreme Abode.

3

We bow down before
the King at Śrīraṅgam's lotus-like feet
which even today have a red colour
acquired from their unceasing immersion in
the sentiment of passionate love
arising out of their stay in the mind of

the most excellent of sages
the illustrious Parāṅkuṣa!

4

We take refuge in the feet
of the One Who delights in Śrī
Whose shining crown freely spreads [its rays]
clear down to His lotus-like feet
the soles of which are pervaded by
the decorative marks
of discus, banner, goad,
pitcher of nectar, parasol and lotus.

5

We celebrate the King at Śrīraṅgam's two feet
one of which in the act of taking three strides
[to measure] the entire earth,
traversed it [in a single step].

Although mountainous,
the earth [seemed to His foot] like land
where high and low had disappeared
with the mountains sticking to it
like grains of sand strewn about!

6

You took the six [qualities] in their fullness --
knowledge, abundant untiring strength,
lordliness, immutability,
power, and splendour --
which come [to be divided] into three pairs,
and becoming four-fold
have graced Your devotees
because of Your passionate love [for them].

7

O God!
Because Your eternal nature is the ground
of absolutely auspicious qualities
untouched by the despicable
it is said to possess
an infinite variety of forms.

For this reason alone
[the Vedas] have described You as
nameless and formless.

8

You transcend the senses --
You Whose omnipresence is wholly different from
[the presence of] objects here [in this world]
which fall within the range of the senses
beginning with sound.

Alas!
Because of this
You are completely invisible,
and are, therefore,
beyond the range of speech and mind!

9

Under circumstances such as these,
had You not descended into the wombs
of divine beings, humans, and others
because of Your own desire
to play [in this world]
then we would have had no way of knowing
the valid means of resorting to You.

10

O Sole Ocean of compassion!
 Ah! How [are we to comprehend]
 this accessibility of Yours?!

Having incarnated here
 in the middle of the Cosmic Egg
 the lowly dwelling place of ordinary people
 You, the Wholly Contented One,
 have become perceptible to the eyes
 of very insignificant people!

11

You bow down and seek a boon
 from the very one You saved from an enormous sin
 whose head was purified
 by the water [flowing] from Your foot.

Oh! Your act of sport is strange indeed!

12

[When You assumed] the body of a Man-Lion,
 Śiva -- as Śarabha --
 became a moth (*śalabha*)
 [burnt] in a part of Your splendid flame!

Which creature, indeed,
 is not confused by Your *māyā*
 an equipment [used by You]
 in Your action of sport?

13

You were vanquished at the sacrifice of Dakṣa
 by the one whose identity You assumed
 during the destruction of Tripura

who was victorious because his arrow
was sharpened by Your power.

[Such] unrestrained conduct is appropriate
only toward those who are at Your command!

14

Sleeping on a banyan leaf as an innocent baby
You held the worlds in Your very subtle body
without contracting them.

Incarnated here [on earth],
why do You guilelessly reveal
Your unfathomable lordly power?

15

You are placed in between Brahmā and Śiva
and have a similar position
in the line of solar divinities
where on account of being Aditi's son
You became Indra's younger brother.

You also took birth in the Ikṣvāku family
and in the lineage of Yadu.

What a wonder and how praiseworthy
for the incomparable Supreme Splendour!

16

Was it impossible for You to obtain
the three worlds
which You Yourself created
and which remain in Your stomach
[during the time of the cosmic dissolution]
without begging?

[But then] if You had not traversed the world
and measured it with Your strides,
how would Śruti
[have come to] be revered?

17

I [want to] ask You about
that indescribable [event]
when as [Rāma] the Rāghava
You were enticed by the deceptive deer
because of Your simplicity in being human.

How did You
Who were powerless
during Your separation from Sītā --
not [even] knowing where she had gone --
grant the Highest Goal [of liberation]
to a bird?

18

Oh! When You are powerful enough
to put onto the path of liberation
[even] the lower being Jaṭāyu
who was killed by a Brahmin
and had not traversed the path of yoga
then why were You unable
to rescue Your Queen [Sītā]
and why did You grieve
while searching [for her]?

19

You rendered leafless seven *sāla* trees
along with the mountains and the nether worlds
by the slow momentum of a single arrow.

Why then did You seek as a helpmate
the monkey [Sugrīva]
who was put to rout by the monkey [Vāli]
and was confused and distressed
at destroying even one of them?

20

Quickly consoling the best of monkeys [Sugrīva]
Your servant and friend
whose mind was bewildered by his love for You
and who, because of his anger,
wanted to kill his enemy, the monkey Vāli,
You pierced the *sāla* trees and the mountains.

21

Or again!
When You killed [Vāli]
not face to face like an enemy
but hiding like a hunter in chase of a wild beast,
[how can You say] that [doing so]
was right for You
a descendant of the Raghu family
when even considering an animal as an enemy
is wholly unacceptable!

22

When You first began to behave like a human
You then undertook an exploit
surpassing [even those of] the gods, in that...!

What in the world have we here, O Lord?
You built a bridge across the ocean
with rocks brought and thrown by
monkeys!

23

O Unborn One!
 Conqueror of the great god King Varuṇa
 with a valour in which
 humanness itself was an ornament,
 and praised by the gods
 headed by Brahmā and Śiva
 who presented Daśaratha [as mediator],
 You were defeated by Indrajit!

24

When You had not yet crossed the ocean
 or conquered the demon chief [Rāvaṇa]
 and did not even know
 his strengths and weaknesses,
 how is it that You quickly and unhesitatingly
 anointed his younger brother Vibhiṣaṇa
 to his position [as King of Laṅka]?

25

Making the demons on the great island
 in the far-off northern ocean
 a feast for Your single arrow,
 why did You not reduce Laṅka to ashes
 standing [right there]
 on the shore of the southern ocean?

26

Tell [me] this!
 How is it that the ocean churned by You --
 [an act] well-known in the three worlds --
 gave up its true nature
 and became transformed into
 a horse, celestial nymphs, poison, nectar,
 the moon, the tree of paradise, and Lakṣmī?

27

O Hero of the Raghus!
 You saw the sinful enemy [Rāvaṇa]
 who fainted in battle
 and released him
 so that he could take rest.

Bravo! [Tell me]...
 which of Your qualities [was revealed] then?
 To which group [of qualities] does it belong?
 How great is it?
 The object of whose praise
 and to be understood by whom?

28

Your younger brother Lakṣmaṇa
 who fainted because of the enemy's missile
 and became too heavy for the enemy [to lift]
 became light for Hanumān!

Because of this [episode]
 Your swoon
 caused by Your being tied down
 by the enemy Indra's magical weapon
 has become well-understood!

29

Woe is me! Alas! Alas!

Since I was not present during the time
 [of Your Rāma incarnation]
 when [liberation] was easily obtained
 with the causes of darkness uprooted completely
 even for grass and trees,
 when oh when will I look upon
 Your pair of lotus-like feet ?

30

Desirous of favouring the Raghu family,
You incarnated here [on earth]
and showered down streams of divine qualities.

Trees enjoying the coolness
arising from Your proximity
became faded in separation from You.

31

Passing beyond bondage,
grass and other such things --
not at all qualified to practice *dharma*,
to repeat [the names of God],
or [to practice] the yoga of knowledge --
were made to attain the Highest Place
because of the fragrance of their connection
with the surface of that earth
traversed by You!

32

Truly You are possessed of
such auspicious qualities
that Hanumān
who experienced them
in the day-to-day behaviour
of Your Rāma incarnation
knowingly renounced the highest liberation
and even today enjoys Your activities
right here [in Śrīraṅgam].

33

With supreme compassion
You pardoned the crow [Jaṭāyu]

who was engaged in bowing down [before You]
even though he had sinned.

For that reason alone
I consider it appropriate
[for You] to comfort a person like me
even though I am a great sinner.

34

Pūtanā, Śakaṭa and the pair of *arjuna* trees
became moths in the flame
of Your appropriately childish pranks
with [their childlike] intention.

Oh! Then how come such a [powerful] one as You
feared Kāṁsa
and grew up hidden in Vraja ?

35

Oh! Eternally dwelling
with Your greatest wealth, the divine Śrī,
while the immortals forever
look upon Paramapada,
and sought after
by the practitioners of yoga
through their yogic meditations,
why did [one such as] You
steal fresh butter in Vraja?

36

[The wise ones] call You
Who cannot be apprehended by the minds
of even good-hearted people
“Eternal One”, “Remover of Bondage”
and “Highest Lord”.

What a wonder it is that
 we have heard of You also as
 “He Who was bound with a rope”
 and You were not even able to loosen it!

37

In the boundless play of the Lord's childhood,
 Pūtanā, Śakaṭa, and the pair of *arjuna* trees
 became moths [burnt] in the flame
 of Your splendour
 by means of Your accidental childhood pranks
 with their [childlike] intention!

38

When there was in Your own home
 an abundance of milk products
 why then did You steal
 from the neighboring houses?

While carrying off [the pots]
 why did You spill
 what remained in the jars?

And why did You [allow Yourself to] become
 a laughingstock
 for the cowherdesses ?

39

O Lord!
 If You had a mind to hide
 the fresh butter that You had stolen
 then, O Innocent One,
 why did You go out fearlessly
 after having wiped Your tender
 butter-smeared finger
 on Your body ?

40

Not tolerating Your ignominy
as the thief of milk products
from the other cowherders' homes
the revered Yaśodā bound You with her love
that had taken the form of a rope!

Such an adventure of Yours
[revealing the extremity of Your accessibility]
noble people cannot bear!

41

If You were tied down with a rope
[and made powerless] by Your mother
then what a wonder it is
that You [Yourself] hold bound the hearts
of those who hear of that [event]
with tear-filled eyes

O Lord,
for all [others] reveal their power
[only] toward those who are already
under their control!

42

[Tell me], O Highest One!

Bearing a face beaming
with eyes wide as lotus petals
reaching to the edge
of your beautiful curls
with gracefully raised eyebrows
a smile flashing forth
and a prominent and attractive nose,
did You take [only] fresh butter
from the cowherders' homes
or [did you steal]
the hearts of the cowherdresses [as well] ?

43

What indeed [have we] here-?

The cause of pollution in other people
now counts for virtue in the virtuous!
That is really true!

Taking the form of a cowherd boy
and tending cows
[the wise ones] now consider [to be]
the highest quality among [all] the virtues.

44

Wanting to live on the earth
hidden as a young cowherd boy
You destroyed the [Indra] sacrifice
out of the playfulness of childhood.

Why [then] did you stand there
holding aloft the mountain
for the multitude of gods along with Indra
[to see Your glory]?

45

O Lord of the worlds!
When You
the lover of the melodies of the flute
were purifying Bṛndāvana
by traversing it with Your [dancing] feet,
how did the forest creatures
in the regions where the sands
were sprinkled with Your song
seem to You [then]?

46

At the time of the *rāsa* dance,
the music [of Your flute]
which caused the stones to melt into water
and the five elements --
earth, fire, wind, sky, and water --
to have their properties changed
was heard only by the fortunate!

47

None indeed is more blessed
than those serpents in the forest
who licked their tongues
on the corners [of their mouths]
which were flooded with a stream of *rasa*
oozing out from the sound
of the flute [played by You]
with Your mind ardently longing
for the festivity of the *rāsa* [dance]!

48

Blessed [also] are those who
abandoning the thought of anyone other than You
saw You, dark like a cloud,
with eyes as wide as lotus-petals,
[hair] adorned with a peacock feather,
hand holding onto a flute,
and the beauty of Your body
enhanced by the attire of a cowherder.

49

Those regions that were fond of
the movement of Your feet
the most excellent mountain Govardhana
the River Yamunā

Bṛndāvana
and the ancient city of Mathurā
are easily accessible even today
for virtuous people.

50

When again [shall] we sinful and wretched ones
who were not born in Bṛndāvana
among the multitudes of
moving and non-moving creatures
such as insects and *dūrvā* grass
take refuge in Your foot?

51

Alas! Woe is me that I was not born in those sands
where the cowherdresses
separated from You
[because they did not participate]
in the *rāsa* dance
resorting to the rows of Your footprints,
threw their bodies --
inflamed by the god of love --
[onto the sands where you once had strolled]!

52

Ah! To this day
the trees or creepers
which resorted to Your lotus-feet
as You gathered flowers
[in the forests of Vraja]
and their descendants
adorn my family deity Bṛndāvana
and my mind!

53

Whatever is beloved by You
is meritorious here [in this world]
and all else is sin.

There can indeed be
no other definition
of these two [categories]!

The narration of Your adulterous activities
in the assembly of those
gathered for the *rāsa* [dance]
[the wise ones] now proclaim to be
very purifying!

54

For You Who have conquered the three worlds
[true] renown does not arise
from the killing of kings as if they were insects
-- chief among whom was Kāṁsa.

[Rather] it is Your Honour's deeds
such as tending the cows
which really melt the hearts of learned people.

55

May He remain in me --
the One adorned with the attire
of a cowherd boy,
Lord of high and low
Whose Supreme Abode is beyond darkness,
Whose sacred thread is an auspicious cord
decorated with peacock feathers,
and Whose hair is made grey from dust
[raised by the hooves of the cows].

56

If You running away
 out of fear of Jara's son
 be an imitation of a human act,
 then why did You cause Śiva
 preceptor of the three worlds
 and Lord of lords
 to yawn [sleepily] during the battle with Bāṇa ?

57

You chose a boon from Śiva
 with the desire for a son.

[If that be so] then why did You perpetrate
 that ungrateful and malicious action --
 [when] Śiva's city of Vāraṇasi
 was carelessly burned down by You
 with Your mind absorbed
 in [gambling with] dice ?

58

Oh! While reviving the dead son of Uttarāya,
 bringing back Sāndīpani's long dead son,
 or still again bringing back the sons of a twice-born
 from Your own [Supreme] Abode,
 how in the world did You
 give them back their own bodies ?

59

Even today I do not refrain from
 the three-fold fault.

Sinful, I have fallen down
 into the deepest, boundless darkness.

One such as I
 having no other resort
 am an [empty] vessel
 fit for Your compassion.

I take refuge in Your feet!

60

Even though I do not have great confidence in You
 nor even faith in the meaning of [my own] words
 spoken [in the previous verse],
 and even though I have uttered these words
 once only,
 because of Your compassion alone
 O Sole Ocean of Mercy
 please accept them as truthful
 and as if spoken [by me] repeatedly.

61

Even though I am very sinful,
 I have taken the name
 “a seeker of refuge” (*śaraṇāgata*).

Therefore, it is not proper for You
 O Lord
 to ignore me.

When Your knowledge, creative power,
 and compassion
 exist [in boundless measure]
 my sin does not deserve to prevail
 here [in this world]!

NOTES

- 1 “Occasional incarnation” (*vibhavāvatāra*) is the Śrīvaiṣṇava technical term for Viṣṇu’s incarnations restricted to particular times and places, such as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.
“gods” (*amara*), lit., “immortals” .
- 2 The phrase “fountain of honey” (*madhunah utsaḥ*) is based on VSū: *viṣṇoḥ pade parame madhva-uthsaḥ*.
Although the central objects of Kūreśa’s praise-poem are the occasional incarnations of Viṣṇu, even so he begins the work with four verses (vs. 2-5) extolling the Lord’s iconic incarnation in the Śrīraṅgam Temple.
- 3 In this stanza Kūreśa plays on the word *rāga*, which means both “redness” and “passionate love” (*anurāga*).
The very close relationship between Nammālvār and the Lord depicted in the verse is based on a relationship that is described in Nammālvār’s own poems. See, for example, TVM 7.9.1, 7.9.7-8, and 10.7.1-4.
- 4 Poetic references to the shining rays of the Lord’s crown are common in the DP. See, for example, PĀTM 4.1.1.
- 6 This stanza praises the Lord’s four-fold creative cosmic emanation (*vyūhāvatāra*).
- 7 This verse is a very succinct summary of Rāmānuja, ŚrīBh III. 2.5.11-25.
- 8 Compare with Rāmānuja, ŚrīBh I.2.1.33.
- 9 Kūreśa makes the point in this stanza that Śruti alone cannot lead one to God; rather, He must reveal Himself in His incarnations. A similar view is expressed in VRS, vs. 6-10.
This verse, and the verses referred to above, imply that God Himself is not only the goal (*upeya*) but the means or way (*upāya*) to reach the goal of Himself.
- 11 Viṣṇu sought the boon of a child from lord Śiva. See *Hari Varṇa*, *Viṣṇu Parva* .
- 12 See also SBS, vs. 95-97 and VRS, v. 68.
Kūreśa engages in word-play in this stanza. Śarabha is the name of a particular form of Śiva and *śalabha* means “moth”. According to the rules of Sanskrit grammar, the sounds “r” and “l” are interchangeable (*ralaiyoḥ abhedaḥ*).

The concept of *māyā* found in this verse as the wonderful and baffling creative power of the Lord is similar to Rāmānuja's. See, for example, ŚrīBh I.1.1.1 where Rāmānuja refutes the idea that *māyā* is synonymous with the indescribable or the unreal: "and hence the word *māyā* denotes the creation of wonderful things....The Highest Person is called the Māyin, simply because He is the owner of that [*māyā*], but not because He is characterised by ignorance...." For the Āḷvār influence on Rāmānuja's understanding of *māyā*, see Poykai Alvar, MTA, v. 7 and Nammālvār, TVM, I.3.10.

- 13 "Whose identity You assumed" (*yasyātmātām..adhāḥ tvam*) appears to refer to God as the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*) or "Soul of the soul" of all beings.
- 15 "Placed in between Brahmā and Śiva" refers to the usual ordering of the three gods when they are presented as creator, preserver, and destroyer: Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.
The elaborate geneologies of VP contain numerous references to Viṣṇu's births in the line of solar deities (I.15.130-131), in the Ikṣvāku family as Rāma (IV.4.41), and in the Yadu family as Kṛṣṇa (IV.11).
- 17 "To a bird", that is, to Jaṭāyu.
- 18 In this verse, Kūreśa employs *virodha-alankāra*. This poetic device has as its purpose the pointing out of contradictory acts, followed by a questioning as to how things could have happened thus. Kūreśa uses it effectively to express his enjoyment of divine paradox.
- 21 The answer to Kūreśa's question as to why Rāma killed Vāli in the way He did, "not face to face like an enemy...but hiding like a hunter in chase of a wild beast" is given in the Rāmāyaṇa itself: (1) The general rule against killing cannot be applied here because monkeys are mere animals, and Rāma was a king, for whom hunting is an appropriate activity; (2) Rāma killed the enemy of a good friend; and (3) Rāma had given his word to Sugrīva that he would kill his enemy and thus allow him to gain complete control of the kingdom. If he had gone to the battlefield, Vāli would certainly have surrendered to him, and he therefore would not have been able to kill him. Had he permitted this to

happen, his words would have been rendered untruthful. (From an interview with Prof. K.K.A. Venkatachari, Bombay 1987). The fact that these answers are given in the text itself points to the fact that in this verse Kūreśa is merely “teasing” the Lord, and enjoying an intimate relationship with Him, rather than expecting an answer to a serious question.

- 23 “Unborn One/Birthless One” (*aja*). The epithet appears three times in the VSN. For a variety of Śrīvaiṣṇava etymologies, see Bhaṭṭar, BhGD Nos. 96, 206 and 524. Note that all three etymologies emphasize the transcendence and supremacy of the Lord, and hence the epithet adds appropriate irony to Kūreśa’s paradoxical verse.

- 26 Kūreśa teases the Lord here with the well-known fact that only things which are already contained in a substance can come out from it at its churning; for example, butter comes from milk. It is not the nature of the ocean to produce a horse, celestial nymphs, poison, etc.

There is a dispute over the position of this verse in the stotra. In some editions, this verse appears as v. 17, and some editors believe that it is more appropriate to that context.

- 27 Two basic groups of the Lord’s qualities are referred to in this stanza: (1) qualities which are necessary for the Lord to be reached by His devotees, and (2) qualities necessary for the Lord to fulfill the desires of the devotees.

- 28 The idea expressed by Kūreśa in this stanza is that both Lakṣmaṇa’s fainting in battle and Rama’s being tied down were permitted in order that their humanity might be revealed.

- 31 According to the Rāmāyaṇa story, even the grass and trees existing at the time and place of the Lord’s incarnations are said to attain enlightenment through their association with Him. When Rāma left Ayodhyā, the entire place was liberated. The same idea is expressed in Kulacekara Ālvār, PmāṭM 10.10, in which it is mentioned that “on that day” (*aṇṇu*), that is, when Rāma left for Vaikuṇṭha, both moving and non-moving things (*carācaraṇkaḷai*) went to Vaikuntha along with Him.

- 32 Hanumān is regarded as a *cirañjīvi* or one of seven persons blessed with immortality. The others are: Asuddhāma, Bali, Vyāsa, Vibhīṣaṇa, Kṛpācārya, and Paraśurāma (MTL, III, 1426).

Even today this verse is recited at the beginning of every Śrīvaiṣṇava reading of the Rāmāyaṇa. The members of the community believe that Hanumān attends every recitation of the Epic, where he listens devoutly, keeping his hand over his head and with tears in his eyes. For this reason, a front-row seat is always reserved for him.

- 34 Kūreśa follows PĀTM 1.8.7 here by mentioning in a single verse three unconnected VP episodes -- Kṛṣṇa's drinking poison milk from the breast of Pūtānā, His killing of the demon in the form of a wagon (*śakaṭāsura*), and His uprooting of the *arjuna* tree when tied to a mortar by his mother Yaśodā. See also v. 37.

- 35 "While the immortals forever look upon Paramapada" (*paśyatsu sūriṣu sadā...paramapadam*). Note how in this verse Kūreśa combines Ālvār themes with phrasology of Upaniṣadic and Purāṇic verses important to Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja quotes SuUp 6 in VS, para.122: "The immortals forever look upon that Supreme Abode of Viṣṇu" (*tad viṣṇoḥ paramam padam sadā paśyanti sūrayāḥ*). And he cites VP in para.133: "The Yogis, who in perfect concentration constantly meditate upon Brahman, possess that Supreme Place which the immortals regard".

- 36 Kṛṣṇa's being bound with a rope is one of Kūreśa's (and Nammālvār's and Maturakavi's) favorite stories. (See, for example, KNCT). The significance of the Dāmodara episode for Śrīvaiṣṇavas is the accessibility and vulnerability of God that it reveals. The marks left by the rope tied by Yaśodā indicate that God becomes the slave of His devotees.

Note how Kūreśa combines this Purāṇic story with epithets from the Upaniṣads.

- 38 The idea of Kṛṣṇa becoming a "laughingstock" is found also in PĀTM 2.7.1: "You are drinking milk (*pālā*) from the pot and those around you are laughing". See also Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, PTM 2.2.1.

- 40 The later Śrīvaiṣṇava commentators regard the “noble people” (*ārya-janāḥ*) referred to in this verse as the Ālṅvārs, especially Nammālvār. PSV reflects this tradition in its gloss of the word *ārya-janāḥ* with “Śuka, Parāśara, and so forth, and Lord of the Bhaṭṭas (Periyālvār), Parāṅkuṣa (Nammālvār), Parakāla (Tirumaṅkai Ālvār), and others”. According to an ancient tradition, Śrīvaiṣṇavas believe that Nammālvār lost consciousness at the thought of the Supreme Lord being tied with a rope, as expressed in TVM 5.10.1. See also 1.3.1: “When he stole the butter that was left on the churning stick, he was tied by a rope. ‘How can that be, how can that be?’” Śrīvaiṣṇava legend holds that Nammālvār kept repeating the last line, “How can that be?”, because he was in a religious ecstasy.
- 42 This verse includes several “signs of a great man” (*mahā-puruṣa-lakṣaṇa*).
- 43 “Pollution” (*malinatva*) may also be translated “wickedness, blackness, impurity”.
- 47 In Sanskrit literature, wild animals becoming calm in the presence of a divine figure is a common motif. Here the transformation takes place not just because of the presence of Kṛṣṇa, but because of the beautiful sound of His flute. A similar imagery is found in PĀTM 3.6.8-10.
- 48 The Lord’s body is ENHANCED by the cowherder’s attire, because it accentuates His total accessibility.
- 49 The longing for the Yamunā River, Mathurā, Bṛndāvana and the places associated with Kṛṣṇa is often expressed by Āṇṭāl. See, for example, NT 12.1-10 and 14.1-10.
- 51 For the footprints of Kṛṣṇa as a symbol of His absence, see VP 5.13.29-40.
- “The god of love” (*anaṅga*, lit., “bodiless”) is “the name of Kāma, the god of love, so-called because he was made bodiless by a flash from the eye of Śiva for having attempted to disturb his life of austerity by filling him with love for Pārvatī” (M-W, 24).
- 52 “my family deity Bṛndāvana” (*kula-daivatam me bṛndāvanam*). Rāmānuja refers to Lord Nārāyaṇa as his “family deity” (*kula-daivatam*) in VaiGad, para. 3.

- 54 Kṛṣṇa Himself is said to prefer tending cows to the glories of Vaikuṇṭha in Nammālvār, TVM 10.3.10.
- 58 See PĀTM 4.8.1-3 which contains three consecutive stanzas on these three unrelated incidents.
- 59 “the three-fold fault” (*tri-vidhāpacāra*). The three categories of offences or sins (*apacāra*) are delineated by Rāmānuja in his ŚGad, para. 16. They are: (1) serious offences or sins committed against Me, that is against the Lord (*ananta-mad-apacāra*); (2) serious offences or sins committed toward My (i.e., the Lord’s) [devotees] (*ananta-madiyāpacāra*); and (3) serious, unbearable or unforgiveable sins or offences (*ananta-sahyāpacāra*).
- 60 The “words spoken [in the previous verse]” to which Kūreśa refers are the famous formula of ritual surrender “I take refuge with/ in /at Your feet” (*tvadiya caranau śaraṇam prapadye*).

Sundarabāhu Stava

1

I have obtained wisdom from
the chief of ascetics Rāmānuja
and have taken refuge with
the auspicious feet of Hari.

With a desire to contemplate those feet,
I now fearlessly set out to praise
the beautiful broad-armed Lord.

2

We worship the beautiful long-armed [Lord]
Who dwells on a mountain
covered with a thicket of trees
that celebrated pilgrimage place
on the Nūpura River
which [wise ones] know [to be]
the bestower of desired boons.

3

The River called Nūpura
flows swiftly in one place
slow and languid in another,
staggers unsteadily in one spot
and is foamy with a crashing sound at another.

She meanders here and there
and in places even plummets [down the mountain]
as if intoxicated at having drunk
the honey-wine named Susundarabhuja.

4

May we worship the Lord [Who dwells]
on a mountain surrounded by a thicket of trees

Who has beautiful iron-bar-like arms
that obtained ambrosia
and the nectar named Indirā
from churning the ocean
with Mount Mandara as a churning stick

Whose mind is prone
toward people seeking shelter

and Who is a refuge for the souls
of shelterless ones like me.

5

I worship Hari my refuge
the sound of Whose unfettered conch
shatters the seven worlds
Who has made His abode on a forest mountain
covered with dense lush thickets
of abundant trees
resembling delusion-causing darkness
the cluster of whose lofty peaks is enriched
by the moon's crawling round it like a child.

6

[The peak of] the great forest mountain
holds the surface of the spotless moon
which has become a mirror

[clasped] by the celestial damsels
seated on its lofty summit
whose faces are adorned
with the *ūdhvrapuṇḍra* mark.

[That same mountain] is
the abode of the beautiful-armed [Lord]!

7

That great mountain
full of forest groves
is the home of
Śrī's Lord.

The monkeys saw the crescent moon
which has come to its peaks
and thinking then
of its role as the crest jewel of Śiva
clearly touch it not
because it has taken refuge
with a god other [than Viṣṇu]!

8

What a place is Sundarabāhu's Vanādri!
where the resolution of a love quarrel occurred
when an elephant was following a she-elephant
who became frightened
at getting a divine command [to stop].

9

This is the auspicious abode called Forest Mountain
belonging to the One
Who is a treasure-house of beauty
and the bearer of Śrī
[a place] where snakes
are not cut to pieces by peacocks
because of [respect

for] the greatness of the family
of the lord of serpents.

10 & 11

This is the most excellent Forest Mountain
of Acyuta, on which
in order to be faithful to each other
in word [and deed]
birds swear an oath
at the feet of the lord of birds [Garuḍa]

and all serpents
[swear] on the lord of serpents [Ādiśeṣa].

The entire family of monkeys [swears]
at the foot of Hanumān

so also bears [swear] on Jambavān
the chief of their own family.

Vultures [swear] on Jaṭāyu,
the master of their lineage

and elephants swear on the one named Gajendra,
the chief of their own lineage.

12

When the enamoured celestial choristers
endowed with melody, sentiment and basic emotion
are engrossed [in singing]
the words of Vakuladhara
here on the slopes of Sundara's Forest Mountain
even the mill-stone melts!

13

??

At eventide in Sundarabhuja's mountainous woods
 a female bee buzzes
 to the rhythm of [swaying] swans;
 and enriching that
female cuckoos celebrate [the holy spot]
 in song;
 as a result of [the beauty of] all this,
 a nectar-tear oozes out
 from the face of an excellent creeper,
 the rows of deer
 have become motionless and tranquil,
 and the rocks and sand banks
 have become cool!

14

May that Indescribable Entity
 clad in a golden garment
 reveal Himself to me!
 [He] Whose cooling glance grants [many] a boon
 Who has arms reaching down to His knees
 and long-stretching, beautiful ears,
 the bearer of Lakṣmi
 Who has vowed to remain [forever]
 on the glorious, great Forest Mountain.

15

I adore that Splendour
 celebrated in song in the Upaniṣads thus:
 "From Whom [proceeds] birth, the life [cycle],
 the dissolution, and liberation of the worlds..."
 That One
 Who is the sole remedy for all evils
 is manifest in Vanaśaila.

16

I resort to the lotus-eyed Sundara
 the Lord upon Whom Śrī has climbed
 Who is described in the acme of the Three Vedas
 with the words "Sat", "Brahman", "Ātman",
 and so also by the utterance "Nārāyaṇa" --
 [words] which are brilliant because they produce
 knowledge of the uniqueness
 of the [sole] Object [of affection]
 obtained through their conformity with
 the drift [of other Upaniṣadic statements]
 Who has no peer, no superior, no second
 the Immortal One
 visible [here] in the bower of Vanagiri.

17

The One Whom Śruti praises as
 Lord of the universe from Whom [gods]
 such as Brahmā and Śiva issue forth
 the Lord of souls
 Supreme Brahman
 [Primal] Man
 Highest Light
 Highest Truth
 and
 Nārāyaṇa
 is also called
 the One upon Whom Śrī has climbed.

That One
 Who has His abode in Vanagiri
 is victorious!

18

May Sundarabhuja enter our hearts
 [He] Who controls the cluster of entities
 beginning with the soul and ending with the earth,

and as their Inner Controller
 has them for His body
 [although] He cannot be perceived by them,
 the Lord Who inhabits Vanagiri
 without at all abandoning
 His own sovereignty [in Vaikuntha]!

19

We worship the beautiful broad-armed Susundara
 Whose dwelling place is on Forest Mountain
 Whom Śruti describes
 as the birthplace of the “Great One”
 Who really has no birth
 even in the inner soul!

20

May I praise Sundarabhuja Who
 reclining on the coils of the Serpent King
 is an adept in love
 for the great Forest Mountain

Whom [wise ones] know
 from the Upaniṣadic statements as
 “subtle ether within the cavity of the heart”
 and “the possessor of eight qualities”.

21

I praise the One named Sundara
 the long-lotus-eyed [Lord]
 and the Resident of Vanagiri
 dependent upon Whom are
 the entire phenomenal existence
 and the limitless dependent universe
 controlled by His own will
 in its essential nature, sustenance and creation,

Who is therefore describable by all words
 expressive of the non-sentient (*acit*) body
 as if it were sentient (*cit*)
 and hence Who is ever irreproachable
 on account of His having annihilated imperfection.

22

The Lord is [popularly] regarded as auspicious
 because He is the possessor of auspicious qualities
 [whereas in truth]
 the contrary is a well-established [fact].

[The Lord's qualities get their auspiciousness]
 from having resorted to His essential nature!

We take refuge with that Sundarabāhu
 taintless and in the form of
 knowledge and boundless bliss!

23

Here on the slope of Forest Mountain
 I surrender to the One named
 Sundara

the incomparable Hari
 ever the opposite
 of all that is tainted
 Whose eternal state resembles a rippleless ocean
 brought about by bliss born from the experience
 of His own boundless glory !

24

I take refuge with Sundarabhūja
 the One upon Whom Śrī has climbed
 Who delights in the great royal garden

surrounding the mountain
possessed of multitudes of trees

Whose state is eternally enriched by
expansive strength, knowledge, creative power,
splendour, immutability, and lordliness
which are limitless and are called
the group of six qualities.

25

Endowed with the principal qualities of tenderness,
impartiality toward all, charm and beauty
with gracious condescension, motherly affection
toward those who come to Him for refuge,
softness, good-heartedness,
impartiality, and straightforwardness
with firmness, steadfastness, immutability, valour,
fulfillment, profundity, and skillfulness,
God Sundara remains forever making His abode
on the auspicious mountain of forest woods.

26

I have fled for refuge to Sundarabāhu
Vanādri's Lord
ever irreproachable
on account of His having annihilated sin,

Who is enkindled by
eternal and divine auspicious qualities
possessed of such limitless greatness
and countless richness
that even a single drop
of one quality from among them
would make extraordinary its own substratum;

[yet those very qualities] are dependent upon
[the Supreme] Soul
as their substratum of auspiciousness!

27

Our treasure Sundara,
a storehouse of knowledge
because He sees all the worlds
simultaneously and eternally by direct perception,
shines brightly in the bowers of Lion Mountain!

28

Lordliness, splendour, untiring strength,
immutability and creative power --
what kinds [of qualities are these]
as they abide in Sundarabahu,
the Birthless One Who
out of even a very slight will [to create]
brings about the generation, maintenance,
and dissolution of all the worlds?

29

As a result of [a single act of] prostration,
Sundara, lover of the slopes of Forest Mountain,
instantly forgives people
who are weighted down and covered by
such limitless, constantly committed sins
accumulated here in this beginningless *samsāra*
the fruit of a single one of which
would not be lessened
even by an experience [of suffering]
lasting tens of thousands of eons!

30

Out of His motherly affection,
 Sundara embraces anyone who seeks shelter
 in the shade of His feet
 whatever the status of his birth
 whatever his nature, whoever he be
 [and accepts that person] just as he is!

31

My refuge is Sundarabhuja
 Who abides on Forest Mountain
 Who would look upon any one worshipping Him
 as equal to the lord of serpents
 [even if that person be]
 exceedingly low by caste or inauspicious actions
 or as insignificant as a blade of grass
 due to the absence of good qualities.

32

In [the matter of] Sundarabahu Kṛṣṇa,
 Śruti
 [desirous of] settling the kind and amount of bliss
 in the experience of each and every one
 of His auspicious qualities
 [started to describe] them as:
 "Those which are one hundred fold..." ,
 [but ultimately] proclaimed:
 "This One is not within
 the range of speech and mind".

33

May I celebrate Indirā's Lord
 the beautiful broad-armed bestower of boons
 the Resident of Vanagiri
 Who has lotus-feet, lotus-eyes, lotus-hands
 and [a body black] with the sheen of collyrium!

34

Resembling the lustre that arises from
 the mixture of essences derived from
 the churning of liquid gold, emeralds and collyrium,
 the indescribable complexion
 of the beautiful broad-armed Lord
 Who delights in Vanagiri
 conquers [all who see it]!

35

Why do people call Him Alaṅkāra ("Ornament") ?

Is it because He is His own adornment ?
 or because He decorates Forest Mountain
 embellished everywhere by
 groves of growing young trees ?

36

May Vanagiri's Lord be my refuge!

He Who is named Alaṅkāra
 because of all [His decorations and garlands]
 extremely fragrant, ever pleasing to the touch
 and delightful to His delicate-as-a-flower limbs
 along with the group of divine ornaments
 and the collection of divine weapons
 which should themselves adorn
 but are instead decorated [by Him].

37 & 38

May I praise the lotus-naveled Sundara
 the possessor of multitudes of
 innumerable auspicious qualities
 Who blissfully sports
 in the groves of Forest Mountain
 with a band tied around His crown

a tiara, crest ornament, beautiful curls
 a garland of forest flowers, earrings
 and an *ūrdhvapuṇḍra* mark
 with the most excellent of jewels
 a garland of forest flowers
 necklaces, bracelets, and a neck ornament
 with decorations such as a bracelet of basil leaves
 a waistband, and anklets
 with sword, lotus, discus
 bow, mace, and other weapons --
 His splendour ever spreading [all] around.

39

Ah! Sundara's beautiful head
 which has hair similar to swarms of big black bees
 hovering about [the lotus of His face]
 like libertines bewildered by
 the beautiful heavenly fragrance residing there
 [wears] the King of crowns
 the royal insignia of
 His overlordship of the universe.

40

The mat of hair curls belonging to Keśava Hari
 the Lord on Lion Mountain
 which has great forests
 abounding in big black bees
 from a family resembling that [mat]
 surpasses the description
 of beautiful threads fashioned from the essence
 of pitch-black blinding darkness.

41

Similiar to the radiant flame of the half-moon
 and bearing a glittering *ūrdhvapuṇḍra* mark,
 the untainted forehead of the Lord at Vanādri

upon Whom Śrī has climbed
brilliantly beams forth.

42

What shines forth [before me] ?
Sundarabāhu's pair of eyebrows
as graceful as a pair of beautiful bows
or two rows of bees
approaching the thousand-petaled lotuses
called His lovely eyes?

43

How can a lotus be [regarded as]
a standard of comparison
for the Lord of Vanādri's long eyes
[when unlike those eyes, the lotus]
is not long,
does not exude love,
flashes forth [only] momentarily,
is insincere,
and is not a thief of the hearts of those who see it?

44

May the Lord named Alaṅkāra
Who has His abode on Vanagiri
look upon us with His eyes
which are solely and unswervingly engaged in
the activity of the creation, maintenance,
and dissolution of the universe.

His own beloved consorts were ravished by
the billows of His sidelong glances
seen diffusing [from eyes] engaged in sending forth
handfuls of the essence of
the ambrosia of overflowing love!

45

The Lord at Vanaśaila Susundarabhuja's
 straight, attractive nose shines forth
 like a sprout on the boon-bestowing tree
 and resembles a bridge set in the midst of a sea
 in the form of His enormous eyes
 overflowing with a flood of love's ambrosia!

46

With coral-like lips enriched by familiarity
 with the nectar-stream of His soft smile
 and replete with extraordinary, delightful,
 welcoming speech,
 the Lord at Vanādri Sundarabhuja's mouth
 shines forth!

47

The cheeks of Sundara Hari of Vanagiri
 which has trees abounding
 in big black bumble bees
 intoxicated from [sipping]
 the mango-blossom nectar spread on all sides
 were ravished at being smelt by Yaśodā
 when she lifted His chin
 with her fingertips!

[Those cheeks]
 which even today clearly reveal
 His unceasing joy
 arising from that [experience]
 illumine [Vanagiri]!

48

With beautiful long ears that seem to be imitating
 two boon-bestowing creepers
 [decorated with] the tall golden flowers

of His dangling earrings,
 Susundarabhujā, the Ornament of Vanaśaila,
 is a fetter for our minds!

49

The beautiful-armed young Susundara
 Whose neck is enriched by earrings
 which reach down to the ends of His curly hair
 and touch His well-formed shoulders
 so pleasing [to the eye] where they meet His neck
 blossoms forth [in Vanagiri]!

50

On a mountain slope surrounded by groves of trees
 we worship the beautiful broad-armed Lord
 Bearer of Mount [Govardhana]
 Whose broad collar-bone
 is hidden by His well-developed chest,
 and Whose neck resembles a glistening conch.

51

Sundara's arms

energized with rapture
 during the churning [of the ocean]
 with [Mount] Mandara

gladdened [in giving delight]
 to Indirā

and adorned by an anointing
 with sandal and aloes

shine forth [here in Vanagiri]!

52

Distinguished by a decoration that is
 a scar [made] by His bow-string
 and ever ready to bestow [upon His devotees]
 ardently desired boons,
 Susundarabhuja's arms
 imitate with their bounty
 the branches of the boon-bestowing tree.

53

The Ruler [of the Universe] at Vanagiri's arms
 which have all the dark-hued richness
 of an ocean, the sky, and a grove of *tamāla* trees
 are partakers of the enjoyment
 of [the serpent] Śeṣa's coils
 and like them are generous, strong, and round.

54

The arms of Sundarabāhu Hari
 the Lord at Vanagiri
 which vied with one another in the sport
 of uplifting Govardhana [Mountain],
 worked together in the churning of the ocean,
 and desired multiplicity
 in the exhilaration [experienced
 during] the embrace of His consorts,
 [now] decorate [Vanagiri]!

55

Of the two --
 the untainted conch and the discus
 that have climbed onto
 the auspicious Lord at Vanādri's lotus palms --
 the first rests on His lotus-[palm]
 like an excellent royal swan,
 [while] the second has approached

[the Lord's other lotus-palm]
like the sun that loves lotuses.

56

Enriched by a garland of forest flowers,
the Lord at Vanādri Susundara's
broad, flawless chest --
the abode of Lakṣmī
adorned by the *kaustubha* gem
which is [itself] the abode of the *śrīvatsa* mark --
shines forth!

57

The navel of Hari,
upon Whom Lakṣmī has climbed
Who dwells on the mountain
[covered] with a thicket of trees
delighted in by divine damsels
with resplendent breasts
resembling elephant heads
decorates [Vanagiri]!

Moreover, [that navel] --
the birthplace of the lotus
from which Brahmā is born --
resembles a deep pit
[created by] a whirlpool stream
overflowing with the essence
of the ambrosia of loveliness.

58

[All] the worlds reside within the stomach
of the beautiful Sundarabāhu
the Lord of the forested mountain
which has trees abounding in auspiciousness!

[But] come see! Ah!
[His waist] has remained thin!

59

The Lord of Forest Mountain
Sundara's good thighs
which pulverized the worms
in the form of wicked Madhu and Kaiṭabha,
and are beautifully-rounded
like a pair of tapering elephant trunks
illumine [Vanagiri]!

60

With an auspicious form resembling
the raised humps of two young bulls
the knees of the All-pervasive One
named Sundarabhuja
Who churned the ocean with Mount Mandara
and is Lord [of the Universe] at Vanagiri
with its valleys glittering
with groves of sandal trees
shine brightly!

61

Where are my two eyes wandering,
having ignored the two legs
of Susundara the Lord on Forest Mountain
similar to the well-rounded, lovely, good stems
of two lotuses placed face downwards
in the form of His feet ?

62

Sundara's lotus-feet surpass the lotus-footrest
in tenderness.

Otherwise, how indeed, could [that footrest]
called "the thousand petaled [lotus]"
bear them ?

63

Sundarabhujā's lotus-feet
with their continuous flow of the essence
of beauty, tenderness, and sweet perfume
defeated the lotus-[seat's] desire
to emulate [them].

Indeed the vanquished [lotus-seat]
carries them on its head!

64

These are indeed the auspicious lotus-like feet
of the One Who bears the name Sundara
from the washing of which arises a tiny portion
of the streams of the Gaṅgā.

Dhruva carries one stream on his head
and Śiva bears another
appropriately named "Alakānandika"
about which [the Purāṇic composers] have sung.

65

May I salute Sundarabhujā's lotus-foot
a fragrant flower blossomed from
the boon-bestowing creeper that is the Veda
a royal swan [residing]
in the lotus-hearts of the yogi-kings
and the best of fruits,
the ripe mango that is the *dharmā*.

66

When the mind of Susundara
 Who had taken the form of a dwarf [Vāmana]
 wanted [to take] three strides,
 His two [feet] were so impatient
 that they crossed the three worlds
 in two steps [only]!

67

Having surpassed in loveliness
 the splendour of the moon,
 the line of Sundara's nails
 a row of ripples from the nectar-ocean
 of beauty's essence called His toes
 now adorns [Vanagiri].

68

The moon that had become thin,
 insignificant and soiled
 at being "honoured" by [its place on] Śiva's head,
 attained fullness, untaintedness,
 brilliance and multiplicity
 [by] taking shelter at [Sundara's] feet
 under the pretext of [assuming
 the form of His] nails.

We honour that Sundara Whose resting-place
 is on the mountain [covered] with a thicket of trees.

69

It is accepted by all people that [the Lord's consort]
 whose act of glancing
 is the moment-by-moment cause
 of the dominion of lords [such as Brahmā]
 is [named] Śrī because
 she has resorted to Sundara.

So people of noble speech
declare You [to be]
the śrī of Śrī.

70

With divine, inscrutable, abundantly marvellous
excellent auspicious qualities
beginning with youthfulness and beauty
and with amorous gestures that are dear
pregnant with wonderful emotion, graceful
and ever incomparable,
Vanādri's Lord delights Śrī
eternally inseparable [from Him]
and suitable [for Him]
by virtue of her nature, form, and riches,
and [His other consorts] such as Nilā and Bhūmi.

71

With sweet guidance in
the looks and expressions of love
and with heartfelt affection for
the intense observation of each other's gestures,
the Lord at Vanaśaila
Who experiences incessant and ever-fresh
divine sentiments
will delight His own beloved.

72

Respecting his own coil (*bhogam*)
[as meant] for the enjoyment (*bhogam*) of Sundara
the Resident of Vanagiri,
the lord of serpents
delights in his own names [Bhoga and] Śeṣa
because his form is that of
subservience (*śeṣatā*) [to the Lord].

73

The lord of the birds
 who is composed of the Three Vedas
 [assumes] forms such as
 vehicle, seat, canopy, and chowrie
 [in order to serve Viṣṇu].

This same Sundarabhūja
 Who delights in [Garuḍa's] eternal servitude
 has become the One Who goes to Vanādri!

74

The good commander of [Viṣṇu's] armies
 [becomes so] by eating the left-overs of Susundara
 the Lord at Vanādri,
 and as sole controller of all the worlds
 waits for [Viṣṇu's] glance [of approval]
 before performing all his tasks.

75

Paraphernalia such as parasol and chowrie,
 the [eternal] sages and attendants,
 and true and eternal qualities
 beginning with knowledge and power
 [have approached] the beautiful broad-armed [Lord]
 and blaze perpetually [in Vanādri].

76

Those who share the position of courtier,
 and also the best of door-keepers,
 the leaders of the [Lord's] attendants,
 and my earlier preceptors
 have [all] resorted to Sundara
 Who has gone to the mountain forest.

77

Sundara Who abides eternally
in His own ever perfect region of enjoyment
[served by His] attendants and paraphernalia
rejoices on the slopes of Vanagiri
visible to the eyes of all.

78

The Bearer of Lakṣmī is just as devoted
to the slopes of Lion Mountain
as to the pleasure gardens of Vaikuṇṭha
abounding in lush and fragrant flower-filled pools
and bowers of beautiful vines!

79

Remaining eternally [in Vaikuṇṭha]
along with Lakṣmī, Bhū, and Nīlā
inside the great jewelled *maṇḍapa*
in the palace of bliss
[reclining] on the lord of serpents
and fit to be served solely by
His own countless, eternal, and divine attendants,
Sundarabāhu
is devoted to Vanādri!

80

Remaining perpetually
in the eternal, limitless abode of Vaikuṇṭha
which is called the Highest Sky,
is composed of the purest *sattva*,
and is the opposite of matter
made up of the three *guṇas*,
that very Hari
Who transcends the best yogis' speech and mind
is [simultaneously here] in Vanādri!

81

This Primordial Egg
 containing within itself the fourteen worlds
 with their seven coverings multiplied by ten
 as well as hundreds of other such [eggs]
 have become [mere] playthings for Sundara
 in his action of sport here [in Vanagiri]!

82

This world differentiated variously
 beginning with divine beings, humans, and animals
 the Cosmic Egg with its seven coverings,
 Prakṛti and Puruṣa, and liberated souls
 becomes a plaything for the action of
 the All-pervading Lord at Vanādri's sport!

83

Continually engaged in yoga
 and blessed with the highest devotion
 to Sundara's feet,
 the possessors of knowledge
 obtain Final Liberation in the Supreme Abode
 and enjoy [there] the position of
 eternal servitude [to the Lord].

84

So wonderful indeed is
 God Sundarabhuja's character or motherly affection
 toward those who seek shelter [with Him],
 that He, the Lord at Vanādri,
 Who practices impartiality
 toward those who take refuge with Him
 has adorned the world with His incarnations
 without giving up His inherent divine nature!

85

O Lord on Lion Mountain!
 The subtle [Upaniṣadic] statements
 described Your supra-sensual form
 as transcending speech and mind.

This being so,
 had You not descended here
 [making Yourself visible to all],
 the injunctions regarding knowledge and devotion
 would have become meaningless by now!

86

You incarnated in the middle of the [Cosmic Egg]
 assuming the divine forms of
 gods, humans, and others
 in order to embrace those devotees
 whose minds have You as their sole enjoyment
 and for whom [You] are the only salvation,
 and in order to destroy their enemies.

O Lord at Vanagiri!
 Because of this,
 petitionary prayer for whatever one wants
 has become easy for gods and humans!

87

O Lord on the great, resplendent Forest Mountain!
 If people have been blinded to Your glory
 by Your primary appearance
 as Viṣṇu in between Brahmā and Śiva,
 then how [much more so] would they be
 after learning of Your becoming a fish!

88

Hey God!
 O Sundarabhuja!
 Acting contrary to Your [true] greatness,
 if You so easily accept
 [equality to Brahmā and Śiva]
 in the middle of the [Cosmic] Egg,
 then fostering inferiority to these gods
 would be even better than
 [encouraging mere] equality to them!

89

O Lord at Vanādri!
 After having descended here
 concealing Your lordly glory,
 which pleased You more
 Śiva's victory [over You]?
 or being tied down by the weapon of Indrajit?

90

O Lord on Lion Mountain!
 O Bearer of Lakṣmī!
 O Ever Undiminished One!
 Even though You want to conceal it,
 the magnificence of the lotus-eyed One
 is easily perceived!

How can Your might not [be seen],
 when You assumed the divine form of a fish
 flopping about in the flood of ocean water
 [at the time] of the deluge
 in which a whirlpool was made to revolve
 shaken by the flipping of Your tail
 raised on high?

91

Long ago at the time of the deluge,
 You took the wonderful form of a fish
 and grew up in the water
 of a pit in the ground
 a pond
 and the River Gaṅgā
 with Manu's boat tied to your crest,
 O Sundara!

92

Becoming a shelter for the gods
 who were wandering about
 with despondent faces,
 seeking asylum because their own abodes
 were filled with flood water
 during the dissolution of the worlds,
 out of His own compassion
 this fish-bodied Sundarabhujā
 Who dwells in Vanagiri
 with a majestic gait
 supported the mountain range on His own back
 in His action of making turbid
 the water impelled by the surging sea!

93

Long ago You, the Unborn One,
 Who assumed the wonderful form of a tortoise
 bothered neither by the rotation
 of the best of mountains
 [placed on] Your own back
 nor by the movements of the Milk Ocean
 severely shaken at being churned by the Serpent,
 rejoiced [and hence] Your eyes [retained]
 the lustre of a fully-bloomed lotus!

O Hari! O Beloved of Lion Mountain!

94

O Sundara!
 O Resident of Lion Mountain!
 Because of the desire of You Who are Varāha
 for the uplifting of the world
 sunk [in the deluge of the cosmic dissolution],
 this earth long ago became visible
 as a spot on the moon called "tusk".

95

O Sundarabhujā!
 When the Man-Lion
 with a resplendent wonderful form
 was in the pillar,
 the air throbbed not
 the moon and the sun set not
 the quarters became obscured
 the entire earth with its mountain ranges shook
 the sky melted
 and the water of the ocean boiled!

96

When the Man-Lion tore open
 the chest of the enemy of the gods
 the nether world was scattered
 and the abode of the gods was dissolved
 the earth was thoroughly shaken
 the quarters were obscured
 and the ocean surged
 swaying to and fro with a [swishing] sound,
 O Sundarabhujā!

97

That [very same] Man-Lion
 Who saw His own form
 reflected in the mass of blood

flowing from a region of the demon's chest
 torn with the tips of His sword-like claws
 and became enraged on account of His suspicion
 [that the reflection was that] of a rival lion
 is visible here [in Vanagiri] as Sundara.

98

How can [the earth]
 deserve being begged for by You
 O Lord at Vanagiri, O Varada, O Vāmana
 when it belongs to You alone
 because You create, sustain, and destroy it,
 and also because You swallow it,
 eject it [from Your stomach], and raise it up?

99

O Lord at Vanagiri lovely with jasmines!
 Do You remember [how]
 a long time ago, becoming Bhārgava,
 You cut down the forest of arms
 belonging to Arjuna
 who was puffed up with pride at his power?

100

O Lord at Vanagiri!
 You descended here
 and became a Rāghava, O Sundara,
 for the purpose of instructing believers
 in how to practice
 completely and without any omissions
 the *dharma* enjoined by the revered Three Vedas
 which are known as Your commandment.

101

The Lord at Vanagiri is regarded by the gods
 as the Supreme Ruler
 because He broke the Destroyer of Tripura's
 Tripura-destroying bow
 and because of the sight of Him
 stringing His own bow
 as Paraśurāma.

102

Here [in this transitory world]
 people want what they can't have
 and what they can have they don't truly enjoy.

O Rāma, all things are already Yours,
 so You look upon the [whole] world
 as equal to a blade of grass, O Sundara!

103

A relisher [of the beauty of nature],
 You experienced living in Daṇḍaka Forest
 on the mountains
 in the wooded thickets
 and near crystalline streams.

[Desirous] of enjoying [that loveliness] once again
 O Rāma
 You became Sundara
 and now resort to the excellent Forest Mountain!

104

O Sundara!
 On a rock at the site of Vanagiri's slopes
 decorated with groves of trees and gardens
 [inhabited by] celestial musicians
 and pure, semi-divine beings

clinging to the large rocks
and singing loudly of Your exploits,
You enjoy respite from the fatigue caused by
Your pursuit of the fleeing deer!

105

What a story we've heard!
Standing on the shore of the southern ocean
You tore apart with a single arrow
the demons who had gone far away
to the northern part of the ocean
and then conquered the lord of waters [Varuṇa].

Therefore, O Lord at Vanādri
O Resplendent One, O Sundara
Your amusements
beginning with the building of a bridge
are just a noisy spectacle!

106

O Ornament of the Raghu dynasty!
Long ago You were intent upon
hunting the deceptive deer,
namely the demon [Marīca].

Do You today resort to Vanādri
full of thickets of trees
in which bees are buzzing
in order to remove the exhaustion
brought on by that [event]?

107

Hey Sundara!
In that one birth when You became Kṛṣṇa
Rukmuṇī as well as Nīlā
suitable [for You] because of her lineage

were boons for You
 Who graciously favoured in a single instant
 two mothers, two fathers
 and also two families!

108

O Sundara, do tell [me]!
 When You were still a nursing infant
 and drank from the breast of Pūtānā,
 did You digest in Your stomach
 the indigestible poison in the form of milk
 along with her life itself?

109

If You took on the condition of a human
 becoming easily accessible
 to those who seek refuge [with You] --
 so be it, O Sundara!

[But] what made You [allow Yourself]
 to be tied with a rope to a mortar,
 and to what end did You then start crying?

110

O beautiful broad-armed [Lord]!
 Becoming Nanda's delight,
 with hair curls having the illusory appearance
 of big black bees,
 You stole [not only] the best fresh butter
 from the houses [in Bṛndāvana]
 [but] the hearts of the cowherdresses too!

111

O Sundara Who has resorted to Vanaśaila!
 My head desires the state

of Kāliya's hood
 or the top of the good *kadamba* [tree]
 because Your pair of lotus-feet
 was placed upon them!

112

Even though, O Sundara,
 You hid your glory in Vraja,
 why did You overrun Indra?

Why did You hold aloft [Govardhana] Mountain
 for seven nights?

And why did You
 get angry
 with inquisitive friends?

113

O Son of Nanda!
 O Susundara!
 O One named Sundara!

On hearing the sound of Your flute
 as You frolicked with the cowherdesses
 in Bṛndāvana,
 the trees and rocks
 melted just like wax!

114

O Sundara!
 O Broad-armed One!
 O Lord at Vanagiri!

When You sported in Bṛndāvana
 with multitudes of cowherdesses
 singing and singing again

in the festivity of the *rāsa* dance,
the hearts of those women experienced
varied shades of the moods of love.

What indescribable condition [of joy]
did Your own heart experience then?

115

Your amorous gestures
and the blinking of Your eyes
are delightful, wonderful, and agreeable.

Your chastisement of worms like Kāmsa
is extolled as [an equally] trifling [act],
O Sundara.

116

O Sundarabhujā!
Your amusements such as the burning of Vāraṇasi
the destruction of Pauṇḍraka and Bhauma
the snatching away of the *parijāta* tree
the paralysing of Śiva
and other [feats]
such as the slaughter of the armies
in the Bhārata [War]
are nectar to the ears.

117

O Sundara!
O Lord at Vanādri!
With Your pair of lotus-feet served by the gods,
You perpetually stand on the peak
of the excellent Mountain called Veṅkaṭa
for the sake of those who seek shelter [with You]!

118

Making Your home
on the Hill of the Elephant
You are appropriately named
the Boon-Bestower King.

You compassionately grant [Your devotees]
whatever they desire,
and You take pity on
the entire universe,
O Sundara!

119

O Sundara! O Lord at Vanādri!
You eternally recline
on the Serpent Couch
in the middle of the Milk Ocean.

[Yet] out of motherly affection
You have made Your glory present
to Your devotees on earth,
and here on the banks of the [river]
that arises from the Sahya Mountains,
You recline on the Serpent Couch
in Your own Abode of Śrīraṅgam
becoming a feast for the eyes of all!

120

Becoming Kalki, O Lord,
You will kill all the wicked people
polluted by Kali [Yuga's] impurity!

This is Your chance,
O Lakṣmī's Lord, O Susundara!

Punish [them now]
right before our eyes!

121

Such are the best of Your incarnations
that all of them have as their purpose
the protection of people
who have taken refuge with You.

Never is it otherwise!

So, O Sundara,
I take refuge with
You!

122

Poets celebrate You
as an ocean of the nectar of compassion,
as dependent on those who have resorted to You,
and as the [Final] Refuge [of Your devotees]!

Becoming visible to the eyes of these [devotees],
You adorn Vanādri.

O [Lord] named Sundara!
Ah! How wonderful it is!

123

Nothing is impossible for You!

Even though You know all about us
You are compassionate and forgiving!

An insignificant person
unable to leave my sins
and without any other recourse,
I am, therefore, dependent on You.

Forgive me,
for I have so little strength,

O Sundarabhujā!
O Hari!

124

All by Yourself You brought back to life
the monkeys killed in the battle of Laṅka,
the Brahmin's son, dead owing to the fault of Śiva,
the dead son of Sāṇḍīpani,
the Brahmin's young sons who went to Vaiṣṇṇṭha,
and the child in the womb belonging to Arjuna.

Would one such as You
O Lord at Vanagiri
fail to grant the desire
of my guru and me?

125

You caused the creatures belonging to Ayodhyā
together with the animals, insects and grass
to go to Your own eternal worlds
which have a majesty
attainable only in the state of Final Liberation!

Now what [good] deeds [had they performed]?
Rich in what kind of knowledge were they,
O Lord at Vanagiri?

126

As the Boon-Bestower on Elephant Hill
You gave sight to the man blind from birth
named Haritavāraṇabhṛtya
and, oh Sundara, truly in that same way,
You have openly [given sight]
to more than a hundred such [people]!

127

O Varada! O Sundara!
O Bearer of beautiful arms! O Lord!

Staying here on the slope surrounding Vanagiri
where Your glory is visible to all
You bestow excellent boons!

128

We hear that You Yourself
right here [in this very place]
made King Malayadvaja
Your devotee.

So also
[similar] desires [for devotion]
are born [in us]!

129

O Lord at Vanagiri!
O Ocean of Compassion!
Please assent to my sincere [request]!

May I [once again] be in one corner of
the Abode of Śrīraṅgam
absolutely subject to
Rāmānuja the Noble
just like before!

130

O Creator of Brahmā! O Lord at Vanādri!
O Lord! O Sundara!

Looking to Your position
as the bestower of boons,
by all means hear [my request].

Enhancing day-after-day
 the glory of Śrīraṅgam
 and expressly refusing
 the request of our adversaries,
 accomplish [things] in such a manner
 that [life there] becomes ever enjoyable
 for Your devotees!

131

O Nectar-ocean of Pity!
 O Lord of the *dharma*!
 O You of truthful intent!
 O Possessor of Śrī!
 O Lord!
 O Sundara!
 O One Who has motherly affection
 for good people!

Drive away all the worthless ones and
 forgiving in the twinkling of an eye
 all the offences committed by good people
 make the glory of the Śrīraṅgam Abode
 ever enjoyable [for Your devotees]!

132

[Although] I have committed sins
 have no other recourse,
 am foolish, without a refuge other than You,
 am evil-hearted and evil-minded,
 I shall solicit You openly and repeatedly
 again and again and again
 [until] I become a vessel of
 Your boundless compassion,
 O Sundarabhujā!
 O Lord at Vanagiri!

NOTES

- 1 “Rāmānuja” (*śrīrāma-avanuja*, lit. “the younger brother of Śrīrāma”, that is, Lakṣmaṇa). Note that this is also the meaning of the name Rāmānuja.
Sundarabāhu, Sundarabhuja and their synonyms are renderings into Sanskrit from the Sanskritized Tamil epithet (*cuntarat tōluṭaiyāṇ*) contained in Āṇṭāl, NTM 9.1, used in praise of the same icon that is the subject of Kūreśa’s stotra.
It is customary in Sanskrit literature for authors to introduce their literary compositions by mentioning: (1) *viśaya*, or the subject of the work; (2) *prayojana*, or its purpose; (3) *sambandha*, or the relationship of author to subject; and (4) *adhikāri*, or the qualification of the author for writing the composition. Kūreśa mentions all four in this stanza. The subject of his poem is the greatness of Lord Sundarabāhu, and the purpose of the poem is its author’s desire to see the Lord’s feet. The author is related to his subject by his great desire to see his subject Sundara, and the poet’s qualification to compose the poem is based both on his having taken refuge with the feet of Hari, and on his having obtained wisdom from his Ācārya Rāmānuja.
- 5 Vanagiri and its synonyms Vanādri and Vanāśaila often function as proper names (referring to the holy site in its entirety). For that reason, the terms have been translated into English in some stanzas only.
“the moon’s crawling round it like a child” (*śaśadhara-rinkhaṇa*). Two of the descriptions employed by Kūreśa in this verse are based on Nammālvār’s verses in praise of the same iconic incarnation: “...the sound of the conch (*kural caṅkattu*) shakes [the worlds] in the temple of Aḷakar (*aḷakar-tam kōyil*).” And again: “the moon crawls (*matitaval*) on the peak of the hill of Tirumāliṇṇcōlai (*kuṭumi māliṇṇcōlai* in TVM 2.10.2).
- 6 The presence of divine damsels on this mountain is mentioned in several Ālvār hymns. For example, “divine damsels” (*tevyā makaḷirkaḷ*) come to the Nūpura River (*cilamparkka vantu*) for bathing” (PĀTM 4.2.1).

- 7 In order to prevent confusion, I have generally preferred the more familiar names of the two gods Śiva and Brahmā to the variety of names and epithets contained in the poems.

In this verse and in v. 68, Kūreśa links Śiva -- with whom the archaic Tamil god Murukaṇ is associated -- to the notion of "taint" or "pollution". According to Śaiva mythology, Śiva has the crescent moon as his crest ornament. In Sanskrit court poetry, metaphors are often employed which play on the relation of the dark spots on the moon to the clean white disk. Kūreśa suggests that the moon's dark spots (that is, its defects) have been caused by its contact with Śiva because the moon is his crest ornament. Kūreśa explicitly contrasts this defectiveness or pollutedness of the moon (which is said to come from its association with Śiva since it resides in his matted hair) with the untaintedness that results from the contact with Viṣṇu. For a study of the concept of the "untaintedness" of the Lord in the early Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, see Nayar 1992:82-86.

- 8 This verse is intelligible only in the context of PĀTM 4.2.5: "Tirumāliṛuñcōlai [that is, Vanagiri] -- where a black elephant in order to stop his mate, who was leaving him after a quarrel, shouted out in the name of the sea-blue coloured Lord Aḷakar [Sanskrit, Sundara] and had his mate turn back on hearing the Lord's name -- is the hill where dwells Lord Kṛṣṇa who once accepted the service of an elephant [whom he rescued from a crocodile] on the banks of a pond and who killed the elephant sent by Kaṛiṣa to destroy him" (translation by Prof. K.K.A. Venkatachari).
- 10 Śrīvaiṣṇava devotees believe that even animals and inanimate objects may be devoted to God, especially when they live in the environs of the Lord's dwelling places. In fact, they regard it preferable to be born as an animal or inanimate object in a sacred place than as a god in heaven (*svarga*). Kulacēkara Āḷvār articulates this idea in PmāḷTM: "I who am enlightened shall not seek the transient human frame again. I shall seek to be a bird (*kurukay*) in the temple at Tirumālai. I do not pray for Indra's pomp surrounded by the immortal beauty of the nymphs and heaven (*svarga*) but

shall seek to be a fish in the streams of the Tirumālai Hills...". (Cited in Varadachari 1970:70).

- 14 "that Indescribable Entity" (*kim api vastu*, lit. "some thing", "some one thing"). The indefinite is used in this stanza to express the limitless greatness and indescribability of the Lord.

"Long-stretching ears" (*kaṇṇa-pāśa*) is one of the signs of a great man (*mahā-puruṣa-lakṣaṇa*).

- 16 "The One upon Whom Śrī has climbed or mounted" (*prārūḍha-śriyam*). Several synonymous epithets appear in this stotra: *ārūḍha-śrīḥ* and *adhyārūḍha-śriyam* in vs. 17 & 24, *samucchrita-śriyaḥ* in v. 41, and *ārūḍha-lakṣmyāḥ* in v. 57. All are Sanskrit variants of the Tamil name applied to Lord Sundarabāhu contained in Āṇṭāl, NTM 9.6 "[the Lord] upon whom Tiru (Śrī) climbs" (*ēru tiruvuṭaiyāṇ*).

"The Immortal One" (*amṛtam*) may likewise be translated "Nectar." While "Immortal" would seem the more appropriate within the context of Upaniṣadic epithets, Nammālvār calls the Lord "nectar" in his eulogy of Sundarabāhu: "[He is] honey and milk and sugarcane and nectar" (*teṇum pālum kaṇṇalum amutum*) in TVM 8.8.4.

- 17 The first line of the stanza is a quotation from MaNārUp 11.3, reworded for purposes of metre.

- 19 Kūreśa's interpretation of the "Great One" (*bhūman*) is founded on Rāmānuja's ŚrīBh I.3.2.7.

- 20 In this verse, Kūreśa follows Rāmānuja's interpretation of *daharamākāśam*, the "subtle ether within the cavity of the heart", as denoting the Supreme Brahman rather than the individual soul. See ŚrīBh I.3.5.13-22.

- 21 The conception of the phenomenal world expressed in this verse is based on Rāmānuja's doctrine of *śeṣa-śeṣi-bhāva*. For a full discussion of Rāmānuja's view, see Carman 1981: 147-57.

Rāmānuja teaches that all words, even those referring to insentient matter (*acit*), point to Viṣṇu. ŚrīBh I.1.6.13 states that "...those intelligent individual souls, who have particular masses of matter for their bodies, form modes of the Highest Self. Therefore they (that is, those words referring to matter) finally include in their import the Highest

- Self Himself. Thus the Highest Self Himself is denoted by all words”.
- 23 According to the Pāñcarātra Āgamas, the Lord, as Para Vāsudeva, is *śāntodita*, that is, “inert”; the three subsequent creative cosmic emanations (*vyūha*), corresponding to the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe, are characterized by constant activity (*nityodita*) (*LakṣmīTantra* 2.49-51). By way of contrast, the Śrīvaiṣṇavas have their own interpretation of these two descriptions of the Lord: in the *śāntodita* state (as in this verse), God enjoys His own qualities only, while in the active *nityodita* state He enjoys His creation as well.
- 24 For “[the Lord] upon Whom Śrī has climbed”, see v. 16.
- 26 In this verse, Kūreśa may be thinking of Nammālvār, who could only enjoy one quality of the Lord at a time; lost in this single quality, he would forget all others.
- 29 The idea that God shows the greatness of His mercy by ignoring the limitless sins of His devotees is further developed by Kūreśa’s great-grandson Vedācārya Bhaṭṭar in his poem *Ksamāśodaśi* (*Stotramālā* 1969:75-76).
- 30 “shelter” (*saṁśrita*); “status of birth” (*jāti*); “nature” (*svabhāva*). Compare this verse with Rāmānuja, BhGBh 9.29: “...With regard to taking shelter (*saṁśrita*) [with Me], no one deserves my hatred because (s)he is inferior in birth (*jāti*), form (*akāra*), nature (*svabhāva*), knowledge (*gnāna*)”. 32 “those which are a hundred fold...” (*ye te śatam*); “This One is not within the range of speech and mind” (*na evaiśaḥ vaṁmanas-gocarah*). The first phrase is a direct quotation from TaittUp 2.8; the second phrase is a restatement of TaittUp 2.9. This Upaniṣadic passage is often quoted in the Ācāryas’ praise-poems.
- 34 The image here of the combining of colours is based on the Tamilian practice of mixing three fruits (banana, mango, and jackfruit) on festive occasions. Poets say that the enjoyment that arises from a mixture of these three fruits, with honey added, resembles God’s enjoyment of the universe. In the same way, the mixture of molten gold, emeralds, and collyrium, increases the enjoyment and beauty of each individual item. Traditionally, the black of the collyrium is said to

represent Kṛṣṇa; emerald is symbolic of the reflection of the iconic Lord's beauty, and gold represents sheen and wealth. Although the beauty of these three can be enjoyed separately, the overall beauty is believed to be enhanced by their mixture (From an interview with Prof. K.K.A. Venkatachari, November 1986).

See PĀTM 3.2.3. in which the Lord's body is compared to [a mixture of] gold and emeralds.

- 35 "Embellished by groves of growing young trees" (*vardhiṣṇu-bāla-drūma-ṣaṇḍa-maṇḍitam*) is based on Nammālvār, TVM 2.10.1 in which the place of Sundarabāhu is described as "a dense garden surrounded by tender young trees" (*vaṭariṇampoliṇi*).
- 39 In the eulogy of important human beings such as kings, poets traditionally begin with the head, while for the part-by-part description of God, poets (out of humility) often begin with the feet. Notice that Kūreśa, following several of the Ālvārs, reverses the accepted order.
- For examples of this genre from DP, see Nammālvār, TVM 7.7 and Tiruppāṇ Āḷvār, Aāp.
- 40 The reference to the Lord's hair thus, "[it] surpasses the description of beautiful fibres fashioned from the essence of pitch-black blinding darkness", is based on Nammālvār, TVM 7.7.9 in which the author asks if he sees pitch-black darkness (*iruḷai*)... made into a mass of black threads (*nīla naṇṇūl*). He then replies that what he sees is really the lovely hair of the Lord.
- 41 For "[the Lord] upon Whom Śrī has climbed", see v. 16. The Lord's forehead reminds the poet of a half-moon both because of its shape and because of its glow. For identical imagery, see VRS, v. 32. See also Nammālvār, TVM 7.7.7 in which the Lord's forehead is compared to "a waxing moon in mid-fortnight".
- 42 The *alaṅkāra* employed by Kūreśa in this verse is that expressive of *sandeha*, or doubt. It is especially effective in invoking wonder and confusion when confronted with the beauty of the Lord.
- Similar comparisons of the Lord's eyebrows to bows are contained in Āṇṭāl, NTM 14.6 and Nammālvār, TVM 7.7.4.

- 47 Sundara's cheeks being smelt (*āghraṇa*) by Yaśodā is a reference to the custom of holding the face of a child close to one's nose.
- 49 Āṇṭāl, NTM 14.8 contains a similar description of the Lord's shoulders spread with His hair.
- 50 The area of the body from the collar bone to the chest is regarded as being very attractive. Its breadth and strength are features much admired in Indian wrestlers.
- 52 "a scar [made] by His bow-string" (*jyākiṇa*). The Lord's four arms are described as having the "a scar [made] by His bow-string" (*jyākiṇa*) in Yāmuna, SR, v. 33.
- 55 Kūreśa's description of the conch as "resting on His lotus-palm...like an excellent royal swan" is based on Āṇṭāl, NTM 7.7 which images the conch as "mounted on the palm of Vāsudeva's hand like a swan".
- 57 For "the [Lord] upon Whom Lakṣmī has climbed or mounted", see v. 16.
- The similes comparing the navel to a whirlpool and breasts to elephant heads are not original to Kūreśa, but are common in both Sanskrit and Tamil poetry.
- 58 The paradox of the Lord Who swallowed all the worlds but yet has a thin waist fascinates Kūreśa. Compare with VRS, v. 49.
- 59 The comparison of the human thigh to an elephant's trunk is a standard one in Sanskrit poetry.
- 60 The sacred site of Lord Sundarabāhu is described as being "in a grove of sandal trees" (*cantaṇappoḷilin*) in Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār, PTM 9.8.9.
- 62 The idea of defeat is conveyed by vs. 62-63. A defeated man is spoken of as being forced to carry the feet of his conqueror on his head. In that same way the lotus footrest, defeated in tenderness by the lotus-feet of the Lord, is forced to carry those feet on its "head".
- 64 While it is popularly believed that Śiva receives the heavenly Gaṅgā on his head, according to Vaiṣṇavas he receives only the stream called Alakānanda, which is the Gaṅgā of India, and not the celestial Gaṅgā (Wilson 1980:331).
- 72 Compare with Yāmuna, SR, v. 40, which also contains a play on the name Śeṣa.

- 74 Kūreśa's description of Viṣvaksena in this stanza is based on Yāmuna, SR, v. 41.
- 76 The attendants [of the Lord] in Vaiṣṇa are said to have taken refuge with Sundarabāhu because they are present in His temple. The Pāñcarātra Āgamic tradition requires that doorkeepers guard every temple entrance in order to prevent the entry of the wrong persons into the temple's Inner Sanctum. (Hari Rao 1967:101, 110, and 123).
- 81 Much of the vocabulary of this verse is identical to Rāmānuja, VaiGad, para. 4.
- 86 "salvation" (*ātma-sanjivana*, lit. "revivification of the soul"). Kūreśa employs here the term found two times in the last three paragraphs of Rāmānuja's VaiGad.
- 92 This verse, a rendering of Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, PTM 11.4.1, contains the same number of syllables per line (23) (Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar 1965).
- 94 Kūreśa's phrase "a spot on the moon called tusk" is a reference to one of the marks on the moon which is said to resemble a boar's tusk.
- 98 The cutting of the king's thousand arms by Paraśurāma (Bhārgava) is described in Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, PTM 5.6.7.
- 107 Kūreśa's mention of Nilā as "suitable [for You] because of her family" (*nilā kulena sadṛṣi*), confirms her identity with Nappinnai/Pinnai of the indigenous Tamil tradition.
- While Rukmiṇi is mentioned in Nammālvār, TVM only once, and twice only in PĀTM, Nappinnai is mentioned by these authors more than 150 times (Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar 1965).
- Kṛṣṇa's being born to one woman, and raised by another is referred to by Āṇṭāl in TP, v. 25.
- 112 Here Kūreśa refers to an episode in which Kṛṣṇa became angry because he wanted to hide His supremacy, but His friends still questioned Him about it. Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar notes that there are parallel ideas in the BhP, although seemingly not elsewhere (1965).
- 120 Śrīvaiṣṇavas interpret the intensity and poignancy of Kūreśa's request for God to descend on earth as Kalki "right here before our eyes" in the context of the trouble in Śrīraṅgam implied in vs. 129-31.

- 122 “You adorn” (*paricaskariṣe*, past perfect, 2nd singular), translated according to the gloss in PSV, *alanikaroṣi* (present, 2nd singular).
- 126 The traditional interpretation of vs. 126-27 is that Kūreśa is praying for the restoration of his own sight. According to Śrīvaiṣṇava hagiographical literature, Kūreśa was blinded by an evil Śaiva king (known only as Kṛmikaṇṭha or “the worm-necked one”), who persecuted the Vaiṣṇava community during the era of Rāmānuja.
- 128 “made Your devotee” (*carāṇa-satkṛtavān*, lit. “one who was reduced to Your feet”).
- 129 This verse and the two which follow it substantiate the traditional Śrīvaiṣṇava view that this stotra was composed when Kūreśa was in exile in Vanagiri during a time of trouble in Śrīraṅgam.
- 130 Kūreśa’s words “enhancing day-after-day the glory of Śrīraṅgam” (*śrīraṅga-sriyam anvaham praguṇayan*) are recited at the conclusion of all Śrīvaiṣṇava public recitations of the hymns of the Ālvārs.
- 132 “Offences committed by good people” may refer to the betrayal of Kūreśa by his own disciple Nālūrāṇ, who is said to have pointed out Kūreśa and his teacher Rāmānuja to some Śaivas who came searching for them on behalf of the king (see n.126). This story is contained in several late hagiographies, and was related to me by K.K.A. Venkatachari.

Varadarāja Stava

1

May Hari
crown jewel on the crest of Elephant Hill
the God Whom the Upaniṣads called
unequalled and unsurpassed
bestow welfare on me always!

2

I take refuge with Devarāja
the Overlord [of the universe]
an Ocean of compassion
and the Friend of all creatures,
Who has Śrī as His treasure
[and is Himself] an inexhaustible treasure
vowed to bestow upon His suppliants
everything they desire!

3

That eternal Splendour
Who transcends apprehension by the senses,
cannot be understood even by yogis,
and is difficult to comprehend
even in the Upaniṣads
is visible [here]
on the peak of Elephant Hill!

4

I take shelter with that sweet Varada
 of Elephant Hill
 Whom the creeper
 in the form of the best of Śrutis
 is fond of imitating
 with its own splendour
 and with its branches containing
 manifold shoots sprouted forth.

5

I resort to that Hill of the Elephant
 which makes visible [to us]
 He of Whom the Triad speaks
 by way of its instruction
 as imperceptible
 by refuting other descriptions [of Him]
 with the words “not this, not this” (*neti neti*).

6

While to unfortunate ones
 the Three Vedas may not [appear to] demonstrate
 that [Viṣṇu] is Lord,
 who would not conclude
 in the Abode of the Elephant
 that Devarāja is Lord indeed?

7

How wonderful!
 The Hill of the Elephant removes the doubt
 of those whose minds are influenced
 by erroneous philosophies
 [as to whether] Hari
 the abode of lofty and auspicious qualities
 is with attributes
 or without.

8

By means of maxims, syllogisms
and the refined sayings of eminent sages,
the Three Vedas might with difficulty
enable sinless people
to devote [themselves] to Hari,
[but] the Abode of the Elephant
[enables] everyone [to enjoy Him].

9

That which is forcefully proclaimed by the words:
“There is an Entity extremely wonderful,
great, of boundless nature and incomparable...”
is [itself] truly seen
right in front [of us]
in the Abode of the Elephant.

10

Even in the opinion of those who regarded the Triad
as a means to valid knowledge
that accords well with other proofs
[such as perception and inference],
the Three Vedas have now become
a means to valid knowledge
with regard to the Highest Reality
[solely] because of Hasti Hill.

11

Here in this world
an entity endowed with good qualities
is considered auspicious
because of those qualities.

In You, O Lord of Hasti Hill,
[it is precisely] the opposite!

On the authority of Śruti
 we have concluded that Your qualities
 beginning with truth and knowledge
 have become auspicious
 [only] after coming to reside in You.

12

Your Supreme Form
 established in the acme of Śruti
 as the Supreme Brahman
 sinless, incomparable, always serene,
 pure, ever untouched by defects,
 and beyond the range of speech and mind,
 is visible [right here in Hastigiri], O Varada!

13

Seeking to touch upon
 Your highest incomparable form
 which imitates the state of a rippleless ocean
 by becoming immovable in conformity
 with the glory and abundant bliss
 arising from the experience
 of Your own serene and infinite Self,
 the Three Vedas become extremely exhausted
 in denying [the existence of] other
 [inauspicious qualities] in You,
 O Varada!

14

That Highest Reality is described as
 difficult to speak about,
 impossible to hear or think about
 to want to worship,
 to see, touch, or enjoy, O Varada.

Oh! How is it, then, that You stand here
visible atop the Hill of the Elephant
for the sake of all?

15

The group of the six principal qualities [includes]
exalted knowledge, incomparable strength,
supreme lordliness, limitless bravery,
the mightiest power, and the highest splendour,
O Varada!

[You] are the birthplace
of limitless auspicious qualities
that defy enumeration!

16

O Varada!
O One with three pairs of qualities!

Your original form shone
with these six qualities.

Then, three [of Your forms] shone
each with a pair [of qualities].

This arrangement
[arises] out of Your desire
to reveal [Yourself to the devotees].

Otherwise You are everywhere possessed
of countless and abundant auspicious qualities.

17

The stage described in the previous [stanza]
pertains to Your
[four-fold] creative cosmic emanation.

Then descending among gods, humans and animals
 in order to play at [Your own] will
 in the midst of the realms of finite beings
 who are under Your rule,
 You become similar to them
 and assume the designation “ *vibhava* ”

Although replete with
 multitudes of excellent qualities,
 You conceal [some of] them,
 O Lord of the Elephant!

18

O Precious Varada!
 Regardless of the form You take --
 the transcendent God
 a creative cosmic emanation
 an occasional incarnation
 an incarnation in a worshipping icon
 or the soul's Indweller --
 You always appear to Your worshippers
 bearing multitudes of excellent, lordly qualities
 [but] to others [you appear] otherwise.

19

Excellent, limitless, countless auspicious qualities
 enabling Your devotees to easily obtain You
 such as compassion, patience, generosity,
 tenderness, impartiality towards all, friendliness,
 constancy, graciousness, love, and authority
 and the highest auspicious qualities
 beginning with beauty,
 O Varadarāja,
 elicit delight in the people
 bowed down [before You].

20

Vedic verses have sung
of Your unique independence,
but we regard You as dependent
because You are subject to
those who seek shelter with You.

Oh! Oh! This reproach rests
on Your omniscience alone
[because being omniscient
You see our offences],
yet You never take into consideration
any fault in Your devotees here [in this world],
O Varada!

21

You appear over Elephant Hill
like its black-as-collyrium peak
O Varada
with Your hands, feet, face and eyes
surpassing lotuses [in loveliness],
and with Your arms
rivaling mighty *tamāla* trees
[in beauty and strength].

22

My eyes feast on the One Who has
illustrious arms and an attractive nose
good shoulders adorned with lovely long ears
long eyes and noble cheeks
O Best among the boon-granters!

23

Resembling a dark cloud
reclining on [the golden serpent] Ananta --
Your hair black like a lump of collyrium

and Your eyes, hands and feet
resembling lotus blossoms --
become forever visible to me,
O Lord of the Elephant!

24

My skin and eyes desire to drink You in
while my tongue is distressed
at not being able to hear You like an ear.

My nose, too, is in that same condition
regarding You.

O Lord of the Elephant!
How in the world can I reach
the state [that I so long for]!

25

O Lord!
Indicating Your supreme overlordship
of [all] the worlds,
Your crown becomes a high-rising mountain
for the thousand-rayed [sun]
that is Your crest jewel,
O Ornament of Hasti [Hill]!

26

O Varada!
Do You wear an *ūrdvapūṇḍra* mark
on Your own forehead
out of high regard for its power
made known by its vertical position
indicating its upliftment of Your devotees?

27

O Lord of the Elephant!
Is your earring
an embellishment for Your ear
a decoration for Your shoulders
an adornment for Your shoulder-length hair
or an ornament for my heart?

28

The splendour of the gold bracelets and armlets
fastened on your arms
emulates the richness of flowers bloomed all over
the branches of the boon-bestowing tree,
O Lord of the Elephant!

29

When the pearl necklace quivers on Your chest,
Kaustubha and Kamalā
the two [who reside there]
are reduced to the [same] condition [experienced]
at the moment of their coming forth
from the foamy ocean
which was moving to-and-fro
at being churned [by You],
O Lord of the Elephant!

30

O Varada!
As if the valley of a collyrium mountain
were made of gold,
the glory of the golden garment
glitters [on Your black body],
imitating a flash of lightning!

31

O Varada!
Today we see in You
the dark night
followed by the bright side of the sun.

Indeed, the dark hue of Your hair
is the [black] backside
of the [shining] sun
in the form of Your face.

32

The eighth lunar day which removes the inequality
of both the moon's fortnights
has made for the [half-] moon's glory
because it has become a standard of comparison
O Varada
for the splendour of Your forehead.

33

The good ink taken up [by the creator Brahmā]
with a desire to fashion Your rows of curls
was tested on the touchstone
of Your broad forehead.

[The streaks left there]
became Your eyebrows.

O Varada!
This could not really be so
because [Your form] is uncreated.

34

Your senses are free from
the limitations of ordinary creatures.

You can hear with Your eyes
and see with Your ears!

That's why Your [exceedingly long] eyes
have resorted to Your ears!

35

O Varada!
Your nose is a bridge
over the rippling ocean of Your eyes
whose billows in the form of sidelong glances
are flowing with the sentiment of compassion
and streaming with love-filled currents!

Your eyebrows are rows of forests
[stretched] on its sprawling shores.

36

A sidelong glance from Your eyes, O Varada,
manifests Your majesty
spreads forth radiance
reveals Your boundless compassion
rains down rapture
and melts the hearts [of Your devotees].

37

The brilliance of Your moon-like teeth
shining on the petal of Your pink lower lip
O Lotus-eyed One
manifests a splendour
surpassing [the lustre of] a string of pearls
[placed] over a [piece of] coral.

38

The gentle waterfall of Your smile
 cascades onto the raised ground
 of Your [broad] chest
 and when dispersed there
 bears the beauty of a many-stringed garland.

O Varada!

Your pearl necklace appears
 like a river sprung from it.

39

O Varada, Your cheeks
 kissed by the much-desired cowherdesses
 who adorned the circle of the *rāsa* [dance]
 are [even now] puffed up
 because of the thrill that continues
 from [the joy of] that time!

40

May Your face
 which has a prominent and attractive nose
 long eyes
 teeth showing through Your smile
 a lustrous lower lip
 arched brows
 and ears reaching down
 to Your shining shoulders
 remain in me forever,
 O Lord of the Elephant!

41

When the Lotus-Lady linked her arm with Yours
 inspired by the sentiment of love
 what indescribable state did Your neck
 as beautiful as a conch

and highly esteemed [by her]
experience then,
O Lord at Karigiri?

42

O Varada!
Your four boon-bestowing arms
[strong] like iron bars
gleam like the dark [branches of] a *tamāla* tree.

Or are they [broad] like expansive oceans
stretched out wide
or do they openly shine like the four directions?

43

Ah Varada,
[Tell me!]

Did Your arms meet with their greatest joy
in the embrace of Indirā?

in clasping the cowherdesses
during the ardently desired *rāsa* dance?

or in being tied down by Yaśodā
for the offence of stealing fresh butter?

44

O Varada!
Your arms shine with reddish finger-tips

like the branches of a *sāla* tree
which has finger-tips in
the form of tender sprouts

like the billows of an ocean
topped with [pink] corals

and like superior serpents
their faces aglow with their hood-gems.

45

You churned the ocean
with Your own [hands].

Moreover,
You held aloft for seven nights
the mountain [Govardhana]
and twisted the necks
of the seven bulls.

Even then, O Varada,
Your hands did not grow tired.

46

O Varada!
Was the red tint of Your hands
caused by Your crawling
in the courtyards and houses of Vraja?

from gripping the stick
for controlling the cows
in the cowherders' cowpens?

or from holding onto the goad and reins
while driving the [chariot] horses?

47

O Varada!
Is it for decoration or [simply] out of joy
that You perpetually carry the overlords

that are Your weapons
 who are omniscient,
 have all the appropriate powers,
 have made a vow to serve You forever
 and have You as their sole enjoyment?

48

Was Your chest the creator [Brahmā's] model
 for fashioning the sky, O Varada?
 [that chest] on which
 the Lotus Lady's face and the *kaustubha* gem
 are manifest as the moon and the sun,
 and whose garland behaves like
 a constellation of stars,
 O Best among the boon-granters!

49

Good people declare that Your stomach
 is the [resting] place of the Cosmic Eggs.

If that be so, O Varada,
 then how is its thinness
 [to be explained]?

The enrichment of those here in this world
 [whose greatness] is self-created
 would lead to an increase in [size and] glory.

But that's not so
 for others [like Yourself]!

50

O Lotus-naved One! O Varada!
 Your navel must be a whirlpool
 created by the rush of *rasa*
 flowing from Your ambrosial beauty.

The lotus [arising from Your navel] shines
as the abode of the lovely Lakṣmī
who is fond of Your entire wonderful form.

51

That very rope which gave You the name
“Dāmodara”
left a callus [on Your body].

O Varada!
Under the guise of three lines
[that mark] has become
the foremost ornament of Your waist.

52

O Lord of Hasti[śaila]!
The earth bears fruit
according to the kind of seed that is sown in it
and we see that [same principle
at work] in You also.

O Lotus-faced One!
The lotus being [continually] created in Your belly
in which resides the [Cosmic] Egg
brings forth multitudes of unbroken eggs!

53

O Lord of the sacrifice!
Although I am an ignorant man,
somewhere I have encountered the question
“Who among the many [gods]
is the Supreme Overlord of the universe?”

We [now] proclaim the final conclusion:
“Brahmā and the other [gods]
about whom a clamorous debate

among the people has arisen
are born, O Varada,
from the lotus arising from
the bulb in the form of Your stomach.”

54

O Kṛṣṇa! O Varada!
O [Lord] fit to be won over
by Your own dear people!

That rope with which You were tightly bound
by the hands of Yaśodā for stealing fresh butter
and which is the destroyer
of Your devotees’ bondage
You even today wear
out of love for Your mother
as an ornament of the body called a waistband.

55

A river called “Beauty” spread out on Your chest
and was halted midway by Your pit-like navel
from which a whirlpool arises
due to the uneven movement [of the water]
in such a small space.

[From there that river] spread out [once again]
and after reaching Your broad hips
becomes diversified into the streams
[that flow] through the regions of Your feet,
O Lord of Hasti Hill!

56

O Varada!
[Ordinary standards of comparison
such as gracefully tapering] hands
excellent emerald pillars

plantain-tree trunks
 and the trunks of the choicest elephants
 even though in the bloom of youth
 do not compare entirely favourably
 with Your broad thighs,
 nor do they impart their majesty.

57

O Varada!
 A river of luminosity
 was born in Your body
 and its two streams vanish
 at [the tips of] Your two feet.

Your knees resemble whirlpools
 born from it
 bubbling up from below,
 or perhaps they are two bullock humps
 named "Youth" and "Wealth".

58

In order to kiss affectionately
 the peak of Elephant Hill,
 Your legs are behaving like the stems
 of the two lotuses facing downward
 called Your feet.

The delight elicited
 by the touch of the mountain
 has made Your leg hairs
 bristle like thorns
 [on the stems] of Your ankles.

How can the person who sees You
 O Varada
 bear to leave [Your presence]?

59

O Varada!
 Among these [bestowers of] exceeding delight
 which do Your lotus-feet prefer?
 the bright lotus named "Dahara"
 [situated] in the body of Your devotees,
 Your lotus-seat which, although seated perpetually,
 remains unfaded,
 the pinnacle of the Vedas (Upaniṣads),
 the head of Śaṭhāri,
 or the peak of Elephant Hill?

60

O Varada!
 The toes of Your feet have all the splendour
 of a series of [sea] billows
 bordering the [glistening] water's edge.

 Does the moon cause Your toes to shine
 from its reflection on the rows of Your toenails?

 or under the pretext of reflecting itself
 on Your nails,
 does the moon [really] reach Your toenails
 thus making them glitter?

61

O Lotus-faced One!
 O Lover of the sacrifice!

The moon
 defective, imperfect, vile, and crooked
 on account of being the friend of Śiva
 and serving him
 approached Your lotus-feet
 under the guise of Your toenails,
 O Varada,

and became purified, perfect in conduct, eternal,
and the possessor of ten auspicious qualities.

62

Long ago the river of the gods (Gaṅgā)
sprung from Your lotus-foot
separated into four [streams].

Taking three paths,
the single [stream] borne by Dhruva
purified the three worlds.

One from among those three [streams]
going through the sky
purifies Śiva.

She divided again into seven [streams];
one purified this earth
and enabled Sagara's sons to reach heaven,
O Varada!

63

Attendants, retinue, ornaments and weapons,
the multitudes of auspicious qualities
beginning with knowledge and creative power,
the Supreme Abode, the [Cosmic] Eggs,
Your own body and so also Your soul --
You made all this
for the sake of those who take refuge [with You],
O Boon-bestower!

64

There is nothing [to be] gained by You
that is not already Yours, O Varada!

Your creative actions
 involving the generation, preservation
 and annihilation of all the worlds
 flash forth from Your mind.

Nevertheless, You descend here
 [to live] among the multitudes
 of inferior gods and human beings,
 in order to embrace people
 who seek refuge [with You]
 and to destroy those who trouble them.

65

O Varada!
 Even the slightest trace of desire
 may destroy the discrimination of the mind.

When that same desire is great --
 what then?

O Varada!
 Raising up Pārtha and the like
 to be Your own person
 You have descended into this unworthy world
 and embrace him!

66

O Varada!
 Unable to suffer delay in embracing
 [Your devotees]
 and not even allowing them enough time
 to be purified,
 You, most excellent among the patient ones,
 were so eager to take them immediately
 to Your own Abode [of Vaikuṇṭha]
 that You descended here.

But what is this?
 You woo even those
 who haven't taken shelter with You,
 yielding Your body to them!

67

O Varada!
 Being beyond [apprehension by] the senses,
 if You were not to descend into this world
 then Your worship, praise and so forth
 decreed by Śruti
 would be abandoned.

68

O Protector!
 O Varada!
 Hiranya perpetually committed
 a thousand offences against You,
 but You [remained] unaffected [by him]
 for a long, long time.

[Yet] on account of [Hiranya's]
 troubling of a small boy,
 You underwent change
 [and responded] immediately
 taking the form of a Man-Lion.

69

O Ocean of the nectar of compassion!
 O Bestower of boons!

Poets declare that You can be attained
 only by [the disciplines of]
 knowledge, works, and devotion,
 and not by other [means].

By which of these [ways]
 did Uttarakośala's creatures
 -- including even the grass --
 reach You?

70

O Bestower of boons!
 On account of the strength
 of Your motherly affection for the devotees,
 You Who are anxiously desirous
 [of proximity to them]
 may willingly descend here [to earth]
 so as to become easily accessible to them.

Oh! But what is this?
 Long ago, being tied with a rope,
 You wept!

71

The extraordinary body of the Man-Lion
 which was contained in the pillar
 and manifested at the very same instant
 as Your devotee's speech
 [on Your all-pervasiveness]
 proves Your supremacy, O Varada!

72

O Eternal One!
 I am being consumed by the three-fold forest fire!
 I am confused and, not knowing my limits,
 am able neither to stand firmly [here in *saṁsāra*]
 nor to be involved in efforts
 to approach You for protection.

O Lord! O Lord of Hasti [Hill]!
 Please cover me with the [cooling] rainshower
 of the ambrosia of Your sidelong glances!

73

[Pulled] in various wrong ways
 and in contradictory directions,
 I am being forcibly torn asunder
 by hundreds of useless desires
 [appearing in me] simultaneously!

I do not even have desire
 for [refuge in] Your feet!

O Lord of Hastigiri!
 I do not even seek my own welfare!

74

Oh Boon-Bestower!
 Without fear and without modesty
 because my obstinate mind has no desire
 for [refuge at] Your feet,
 and adorned as I am with the armour of evil deeds,
 I prattle something before You!

75

Diseases of the body and mental agony,
 insatiability [of the senses],
 the gain of things I do not wish for,
 the loss of much-desired objects,
 and inferiority [feelings] which make for anger --
 all these continually torture my mind
 O Lord of Hasti [Hill]
 but loss of the treasure of Your affection
 [does not trouble me at all].

76

The birthplace of contempt and arrogance
 lust and passion,
 greed and delusion,
 I am sinking here in [the sea of] *saṁsāra* ,
 O Lord beyond dualities!

Who am I to resort to You,
 to see and seek to attain You
 Who are possessed of eternal, flawless,
 and abundant auspicious qualities,
 O Lord of the Elephant!

77

I am inwardly consumed by
 unavailing and meaningless brooding
 over how my sons and others will be
 when I am dead.

But, O Lord of Hastigiri,
 there is not even an iota of consideration
 as to how I myself shall be!

78

Because of the strength of my evil inclinations
 arising from the mental impressions
 of previous births
 my mind is not able to abandon [the world]
 even while analyzing happiness
 arising from the sense organs
 in which defects
 such as lightning-like transitoriness
 abundant sorrow
 the cause of calamity
 and triviality
 are [clearly] seen,
 O Boon-Bestower Emperor!

79

By leaving undone
 what is enjoined [in the scriptures]
 and by doing what is prohibited
 intentionally or unintentionally
 with hundreds of unbearable offences against You
 and with hundreds of sins
 in thought, word, and deed
 uncountable even by You
 committed against the devotees,
 O Lord of Hasti [Hill],
 I am doomed!

80

[Although] servitude to You is natural to me
 I -- such as I am --
 formerly erred
 robbing You [of my state of servitude],
 [yet] You [still] considered me Your own.

O Lord of the Elephant!
 Put to rest this dispute of ours!

81

O Lord of Hasti [Hill]!
 Great connoisseur of Your service [that I am],
 may I consider enjoyments
 such as equality with Brahmā and Śiva
 or the liberation referred to as
 the experience of one's own soul
 the equal of salt water!

82

Helpless and shelterless,
 wallowing [as I am]
 in the ocean of worldly existence --

filled with a profusion of the poisonous snakes
 of sensual enjoyments
 and a repository of the crocodiles
 of birth and death --
 I choose You as my refuge,
 O Bestower of boons!

83

Filled with thousands of inauspicious qualities,
 beyond the pale of even an iota
 of a [single] auspicious quality,
 and a great sinner who has not performed
 [any] good deeds,
 I choose You
 O Varada of great compassion
 [to be] my refuge!

84

The [very] word uttered by me
 [in] choosing [You as] my refuge
 was spoken by me without forethought.

O Varada!
 If You nevertheless consider me
 worthy of Your compassion,
 then am I saved!

85

If one's mind were contrite
 with respect to countless crimes committed,
 then, O Varada,
 we do not doubt
 that You [would] take pity!

[But] we who have unrepentant minds
 are doomed indeed!

86

O Varada!

I have no better, easily available means
that would grant me the One for Whom I long
than the uttering of the word “refuge” (*śaraṇam*).

This is the opportunity
for [You to show me] Your compassion.

87

I am attached to worldly objects
and am a person of great sensual desire,
but I have not even the faintest [longing]
for [taking refuge at] Your feet.

Therefore, O Varada,
it is Your responsibility [to see that]
desire for Your feet is created in me.

88

O Varada!

Even [the desire to utter]
the word “refuge” (*śaraṇam*)
a revivifying thought
would not arise without Your grace.

[From this I know]
that You are inclined
to show Your grace to me.

89

O Varada, grant me whatever I desire
here [in *saṁsāra*]
so long as it is not an obstacle
to the attainment of Your feet.

Otherwise, O Lord,
grant [me] at once
Your foot alone.

90

Do grant me whatever else I pray for
out of a helplessness caused by
hundreds of evil inclinations
arising from the mental impressions
of previous births!

O [Lord] of unequalled compassion!
O Benefactor of all!
O Granter of everything!
O Bestower of boons!
O Ocean of forgiveness!

91

Whether and in whatever manner You grant me
the thing I desire or something else
O Lord Varada
experiencing [whatever You give]
is only appropriate for me
because I -- such as I am --
have placed upon You
the entire responsibility
[for my welfare].

92

O Lord of the Elephant!
I choose to behold You
Who are difficult to attain
for those who are not Your devotees
just as You are --
whatever Your form or size
Whoever You are

whatever Your auspicious qualities and glory
 whatever actions You perform --
 solely by [my utterance of] the word "surrender".

93

Oh!
 O Compassionate One!
 O Varada!
 O Ocean of forgiveness!
 and especially O Benefactor of all persons!

O Granter of everything!
 O Knower of what is beneficial [for the devotees]!
 O Omniscient One!
 O Possessor of all powers!

Having removed at once
 [all my other desires],
 lead me to [the condition of]
 Your servitude alone!

94

O Lord of Hasti [Hill]!
 Your compassion is such that
 You make those who worship You
 by virtue of their own qualities
 by their own deeds
 on the basis of their own knowledge
 or out of devotion to You
 [Your servants].

That being so, I regard Your compassion itself
 as my support.

95

I am not a devotee
 am without auspicious qualities
 do not fulfill the prescribed duties
 nor even make an effort to perform them
 and my sins remain unexpiated.

O Varada!

If one such as I were to obtain Your feet,
 then Your auspicious qualities
 beginning with forgiveness and compassion
 [would become] fully manifest [to everyone].

96

With my mind thrilled with delight
 and impelled by Your sidelong glances
 the amorous play of Your eyebrows
 Your nectar-like smile
 and Your auspicious gestures
 when, O Varada,
 shall I serve You?

97

O Lord of Hasti [Hill]!
 May we hear Your cool and soothing
 nectar-like words which
 having quenched the thirst of all the senses
 penetrate into the region of the mind
 becoming eternally rooted [there].

98

O Lord of the Elephant!
 In all places, at all times, and in all conditions,
 may I always remain near You
 with my mind unattached to anything else

and my sole delight in performing
all kinds of Your service.

99

Ah! Varada!
When will a continuous series
of the waves of Your sidelong glances
from the two rivers that are Your eyes
flowing with streams
of the sentiments of uncreated love
which diffuses all around
and is a remover of fatigue
be poured out upon this person?

100

O Lord of Hasti [Hill]!
For more than a hundred years
let us look upon You Who are served by Śrī
who is always longing [for You],
the continuous stream
of whose sentiment of love
-- although eternal --
is forever fresh.

101

O Bestower of boons!
How may I attain Your [Supreme] Abode
which is inconceivable,
exceedingly wonderful
beyond inference
[and although] within the easy reach
of Your devotees
is very difficult to obtain
for Sanandana and the others
who are well-established in abstract meditation?

102

I have resorted to the feet of Rāmānuja,
the foremost light of the sage Yāmuna's lineage.

[Yāmuna] is from the line of Nātha[muni],
who belongs to the lineage of the sage Parāṅkuśa
the servant of [Śrī] Your Queen.

Therefore, O Varada,
I am looked upon by You
as Your very own!

NOTES

- 1 The Supreme Brahman is described as “unequalled” and “unsurpassed” in ŚvetUp 6.8.

Kūreśa refers to “Elephant Hill” or “Hill/Abode/Rock of the Elephant(s)” by a variety of nearly synonymous epithets (*hasti-giri*, *hasti-śaila*, *hasti-kṣitidhara*, *hasti-dhāma*, *kari-giri*, *kari-śaila*). These references (and those contained in Rāmānuja's teacher Kāñcīpurṇa's *Devarājāṣṭakam*) are the earliest in Sanskrit literature.

Raman presents us with convincing etymology of these Sanskrit place names. According to Raman, the area surrounding the Varadarāja Swāmi Temple was first known as Attiyūr (or Tiruvattiyūr), and this name occurs in Putat Ālvār's ITA, vs. 95-96. Inscriptional evidence from the temple records shows that as early as C.E. 1129 the hymns of that Ālvār were, indeed, connected with the temple.

Vaiṣṇavas endow *atti* wood (Sanskrit, *udambara*) with a special significance; many Āgamic texts on iconography prescribe it as the most suitable material from which to construct an icon. According to Raman, Vaiṣṇavas regard these trees as manifestations of Viṣṇu Himself, which he establishes by referring to VSN which contains the name “Udambara” (Raman 1975:4-5). (It must be noted, however, that this particular etymology of that name of Viṣṇu

must have been lost by the time of the early Ācāryas, for Bhaṭṭar makes no mention of the connection in his BhGD, No. 827).

Raman suggests that the original name for Hastigiri, that is Attiyūr, was derived from the name of this wood, for the *sthala purāṇa* of Varadarāja Swāmi Temple mentions that the area was once filled with *atti* trees and that the original image of the deity (named Attivaradar) was made of *atti* wood.

Commenting on the name Hastigiri, Raman notes: “Thus, the etymology of place-name has had a chequered evolution. The simple Tamil name of Attiyūr, glorified by the Ālvār, had to undergo a painful course of Sanskritisation to become Hastipura and then Hastigiri, and then the latter was again Tamilized as Attigiri! Curiously, the latter word is a hybrid, neither purely Sanskrit nor Tamil. *Atti* is Tamil (and may refer to the *atti* tree or an elephant) but *giri*, meaning “hill”, is Sanskrit; when the word Hastigiri attained popularity in Vaishnavite literature, the legendary story of the elephant [that is, the tale of Gajendra] was probably tagged on to it because *hasti* in Sanskrit means elephant. This legend has attained currency so much that the significance of the original Tamil word, Attiyūr, was lost” (Raman 1975:5-6).

The inclusion of the term “hill” (*giri*) in the Sanskrit name is derived from the traditional belief that the main sanctuary of the temple is built over a small hillock. The main shrine of the temple, which houses Lord Varadarāja, is above ground level, standing on the top of a square walled-in platform, a raised enclosure 30 square metres in size, and 10 metres in height. Whether it is a natural hillock or an artificially raised mound -- perhaps a Jaina or Buddhist stupa? -- is not known, and archaeological investigation of the area has been prohibited by the Government of India.

In the 14th century, Vedānta Deśika composed a stotra in praise of Varadarāja which was heavily influenced by Kūrēśa's VRS. See his *Varadarāja Pañcāśat* in *Stotramālā* or the English translation of the same by Filliozat 1992. Filliozat's translation of the synonymous epithets Hastigiri,

etc. (Hill of elephants), is based on the *sthala-purāṇa* story which connects the shrine to a sacrifice performed there by the elephants of the four directions. In my translation (Hill of the Elephant), I have preferred to emphasize the elephant Gajendra's long-standing connection with the shrine.

- 5 “Visible...invisible” (*parokṣa...aparokṣa*). In their more general meaning, these terms may be taken to refer to all of the senses, and may be translated as “perceptible... imperceptible”.
- 6 According to popular Śrīvaiṣṇava thought, “the unfortunate ones” would be those people on whom the glance of God did not fall at the time of birth. On the other hand, fortunate people are those on whom the glance of God did fall at the time of birth, creating in them the desire for *mokṣa* and *Vaiṣṇava*. The choice is entirely up to God.
- 17 “four-fold creative cosmic emanation” (*vyūha*).
- 18 This stanza contains the earliest extant Śrīvaiṣṇava reference (in technical terminology) to all five forms of Viṣṇu.
- 19 The two categories of qualities mentioned here -- “the most excellent qualities” (*vara-guṇāḥ*) and “the highest qualities” (*uttama-guṇāḥ*) -- are applied loosely, and do not function in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition as technical terms.
- 20 The idea expressed in this stanza is similar to that of PĀTM 4.9.2, which traditional interpretation regards as revealing the Lord's independence: “Even if the Lotus-Lady, who mediates their cases, tells the faults of his devotees, the Lord may say ‘My servants would not do that; and if they did, they did it for good’ ” (translation by Ate).
See also Poykai Ālvār, MTA, v. 1: “Even if a person commits mistakes [as big as] a mountain, God will take into account only the good things”.
- 25 The imagery in this verse is based on TVM 6.6.6, in which the Lord's crown is compared to a golden mountain.
- 26 There are two kinds of *punḍras* (marks or signs): the *ūrdhva* (“tending or rising upwards”), that is the “vertical” mark worn by Vaiṣṇavas, and the *tiryak* (“horizontal”) mark worn by Śaivas. According to Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding, the vertical mark encourages thinking on elevated topics such as *mokṣa*, while the horizontal mark of the Śaivas en-

courages thinking of the things of this world (Aṇṇaṅkar-ācāriyar 1970).

The two groups of Śrīvaiṣṇavas today (Teṅkalai and Vaṭakalai) wear marks of slightly different shapes. Note that this verse does not describe the precise shape of the mark. Indeed, discussion of the Teṅkalai and Vaṭakalai forms of the mark does not appear in literature until well after the 13th century (From an interview with Prof. K.K.A. Venkatachari, October, 1986).

- 27 Kūreṣa evokes a sense of wonder in this verse by the employment of the *saṁdeha-alāṅkāra*, which involves the doubt as to whether the thing described is “this thing”, “that thing” or “yet another thing”.

The description of the parts of the Lord’s body in this section of the stotra may be compared to Yāmuna, SR, vs. 32-36, and especially v. 34.

The poet’s wonder as to whether or not the earring is a decoration for the Lord’s shoulders is an oblique reference to the length of the Lord’s ears, a *mahā-puruṣa-lakṣaṇa* (sign of a great man).

- 28 The Lord’s shoulders are likewise compared to a *kalpaka* tree (Tamil, *kaṭpaka*) in Nammālvār, TVM 6.6.6.
 30 The Lord is described likewise as resembling “a dark cloud filled with lightning” in PĀTM.8.1.
 31 According to traditional Indian thought, one side of the sun is thought to be dark, and the other bright.
 34 Literally, this verse reads “With regard to Your eyes and ears for the grasping of sound and form, the regulation is not like that [for ordinary] creatures. [Your eyes and ears] have the capability of seeing/perceiving all; therefore, Your two eyes have resorted to Your two ears”.

The image of the eyes resorting to (that is, reaching up to) the ears is an indirect praise of very long eyes, the sign of a great man (*mahā-puruṣa-lakṣaṇa*).

- 36 The phrase “melts the hearts [of the devotees]” (*āṇḍra-bhāvam*) literally means “makes wet or moist”. Aṇṇaṅkar-ācāriyar (1970) glosses it with the Tamil word *īram*, meaning “...love, affection, attachment... grace, mercy, favour” (MTL, I, 380).

- 37 The teeth of the Lord are frequently compared to “pearls” and His lip to a piece of coral by the Ālvārs. See PĀTM 2.2.2. and Nammālvār, TVM 7.7.3.
- 41 According to PSV, the imagery of this verse is related to the episode of Visnu’s churning of the ocean. When Śrī (Padmā, the Lotus-Lady) came out of the ocean which was being churned, she clung to Visnu’s neck with one arm, and linked her other arm in his.
- 45 This is the only explicit reference in the stotras of Kūreśa and Bhattar to the Tamil story of Kṛṣṇa’s twisting of the necks of the seven bulls in order to win Nappiṇṇai’s hand in marriage. While the Sanskrit equivalent of the name Nappiṇṇai is never mentioned in the stotras, she is identified on the Sanskrit side of the tradition with Nīlā.
- 46 Kṛṣṇa’s driving of the [chariot] horses is a reference to his role as Arjuna’s charioteer in BhG.
- 49 A thin waist is a *mahā-puruṣa-lakṣaṇa*. Here it is especially significant because Visnu’s stomach remains thin in spite of His having eaten the Cosmic Eggs, that is, swallowed the universe.
- 59 “the fine, bright lotus” (*daharam paṇḍitam pundarikam*) See ChUp 2.1.1 *yatpundarikam...daharam*.
- 63 “Your own body and so also Your soul” (*atmadehastathā ātmā*) is glossed by Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar (1970) with the words *svāsātāraṇ vikrahamumtivyātmasvarūpum*.
- 64 Compare with Rāmānuja’s concept of incarnation in BhGBh IV.8 & 11. The Lord’s incarnations (whether occasional or iconic) are always directly linked to the enjoyment and satisfaction of His devotees.
- 65 God is said to have taken Pārtha (Arjuna) as His “own person” because Kṛṣṇa was interested in Draupadī. The Śrī-vaiṣṇava Ācāryas teach that the Pāṇḍavas were no better than Duryodana. Only Kṛṣṇa’s interest in Draupadī caused him to side with the Pāṇḍavas.
- 72 “The three-fold forest fire” is glossed in PSV with the words: (1) *adhyātmika* or diseases; (2) *adhibhūtika* or troubles caused by other creatures; and (3) *adhidevika* or climate.

The three kinds of afflictions have their origin in Sāṃkhya philosophy where they are described as “internal, as bodily or mental distress; external, as injuries from men, animals, etc.; and superhuman, or inflictions by gods or demons” (Wilson, 1980: I, 200).

- 74 “evil deeds” (*duṣkarma*, literally, “bad *karma*”).
- 81 “The enjoyment of one’s own self” (*svātmānubhūti*) is a reference to *kaivalya* (“perfect isolation, abstraction, detachment from all other connections, detachment of the soul from matter or further transmigrations...” M-W, 311).
- 92 “surrender” (*prapatti*).
- 94 “By their own deeds, on the basis of their own knowledge, or out of devotion to You” is a reference to the three yogas of *karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti*. Even the worshippers of the Lord who approach Him by these three means are ultimately led by Him to His service (*dāśya/kainkarya*). Note, however, that the devotees attain their position as servants of the Lord not because of their religious practices but because of His compassion (*dayā*).

Śrī Stava

1

May Śrī bestow welfare [on us].

Having beheld her face
and depending upon her expressions,
Hari creates, sustains, and dissolves all the worlds,
and bestows heaven, hell and the Final Beatitude.

This amusing pastime would not be enjoyable
but for the oneness of their delight.

2

O Goddess Śrī!
I long to praise You,
Mother of the entire world.

So make my speech suitable [for the task]
and elevate my mind so as to be dominated by love.

Make my devotion auspicious
and gladden this servant
who has taken refuge with You.

O Lakṣmī,
let [people] like me become the target of
the billows of Your sidelong glances
flowing forth.

3

What do poets declare
a [real] stotra to be?

If a stotra is a statement of non-existent qualities
found elsewhere,
[or qualities] belonging to another
and superimposed upon [the one to be praised],
then what a waste would such words be
if directed to you!

On the other hand, if [poets] should say
[that a stotra consists of]
a good, complete, all around description
of real and existent qualities
then how can they speak [of you at all],
when even Br̥haspati himself
incapable of such speech
[drowns] in the ocean of your true qualities?

4

My words [describing Your qualities] --
which are well-known as being
beyond the grasp of speech and mind --
are spoken with a watering tongue.

But I do not regard
this [impossible attempt to praise you]
as ridiculous,
for after all, a thirsty partridge
does not hold back her tongue
and refuse to sip the moonlight,
just because she is unable to drink all of it!

5

O Goddess!

Although I am a lowly mortal,
 evil-minded, lacking in love [for You]
 listless [in Your service, and] an ignoramus,
 I am neither afraid nor ashamed
 to lick [the nectar of] Your glory,
 [for such an act] would not be polluting.

If the River Gaṅgā
 is lapped by a dog
 the dog is neither ashamed nor afraid;
 rather, his thirst is
 quenched.

6

Whether great or small,
 the wealth of all people
 is everywhere regarded as the outcome
 of Lakṣmī's benevolent glance.

This should not astonish us,
 because even Nārāyaṇa
 Lord of the worlds
 and the Ruler of Souls
 Who has no lord over Him
 thinks Himself fortunate
 only on account of your glance!

7

Hey Goddess!
 Whatever wealth exists among people,
 whatever form of beauty and charm [are found]
 in this world,
 whatever is called good or auspicious
 is dependent on you.

Therefore, all these things enjoy excellence
 either because they are identical with [the word] *śrī*
 or because they are [best described]
 by a word like *śrīmat*.

8

O Goddess!
 Although omniscient
 neither you nor even Hari
 can comprehend the extent of your glory!

[How can this be?]

[Wise people] know that
 one who vouches for the existence
 of the non-existent sky-lotus
 is called “deluded”.

[Since Your glory has no limits],
 ignorance of its extent
 is ignorance of the non-existent
 and is therefore compatible with your omniscience!

9

In this world [people] declare that
 the difference between a tree and Bṛhaspati
 results from the revered Bhārati’s grace.

But that very Bhārati
 is Your servant.

I take refuge with Śrī,
 First Queen of the God of gods!

10

I take shelter with Śrī,
First Queen of the God of gods.

[When] she vowed [to cast]
her soft sidelong glances [in its direction],
the universe
earlier beset with dissolution
arising from the absence of that glance
shone forth instantly
like a tender and beautiful budding blossom.

11

Those who are even momentary targets
of [Lakṣmī's] sidelong glances
become great lords.

May that same Lakṣmī
First Queen of the King at Śrīraṅgam
let her sidelong glance fall also upon me.

NOTES

- 1 This verse clearly articulates the Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding of Śrī's role in the creation of the worlds. For a full discussion of the Śrīvaiṣṇava view of Śrī, see Nayar 1992:221-56.
- 4 The partridge (*cakora/cakorī*) is believed to subsist on moonbeams.
- 8 The notion that the glory of Śrī cannot be completely comprehended by Viṣṇu (just as He cannot fully comprehend His own glory) is based on Yāmuna, *Catuḥ Ślokī*, v. 2.
- 9 "First Queen of the God of gods" (*deva-deva-mahiṣīm*) is an epithet of Śrī contained in Rāmānuja, ŚGad, para. 1.

Śrīraṅgarāja Stava: The First 100 Stanzas

1

We recite the word “homage”
to Śrīvatsacihna Miśra
whose words attain [the position of]
a marriage-thread
[tied] around the neck of the Three Vedas!

2

Long live the one named Govinda
who appears like a shadow at the feet of Rāmānuja
never leaving him;
whose essential nature is one of
dependence upon that [Rāmānuja]
and who is my resting-place!

3

Long live the sage Rāmānuja
who with the weapon of devotion to Hari
drove away the demon in the form of
Kali [Yuga’s] tumultuous play!

4

We honour Yāmuna
who removed from the Vedic path
the thorn in the form of
persons who argue unreasonably,
and who in devotion to God
is also [our] guide.

5

I praise the cloud named Nāthamuni
who caused a rain of detachment
knowledge of the reality of God and devotion
[to fall] on the obstacle to devotion.

6

I cherish the seer [Śaṭhakopa]
who appeared like a personification
of thirst for Kṛṣṇa
and who saw by divine intuition
the thousand-branched Tamil Veda.

7

Salutations to Śrīraṅga's beloved
on account of the movement of whose eyebrows
this world is divided
into the ruler and the ruled
and very insignificant persons
are distinguished from great lords!

8

I take refuge with the Splendorous One
Who reclines in Śrīraṅgam --
an ornament on the breast of Śrī
shining in the lap of Anantabhoga
just like the wish-fulfilling jewel.

9

In the auspicious abode [at Śrīraṅgam]
there exists an Entity transcending description
as “this” or “that”
having as its only distinguishing mark
red decorative dye
[imprinted] from the feet of Lakṣmī.

10

Let the big black bee that is Śrīraṅgarāja
moving to and fro around
the flower-cluster raised breast
of the desire-granting creeper Lakṣmī
enjoy [Himself] in my lotus-like mind!

11

We passionately seek for a hundred autumns
the blessing of Śrīraṅgarāja
Whose chest has a *makara*-shaped mark
made of musk
imprinted from the breast of Śrī.

12

May Śrīraṅgam's Leader
Who perpetually carries five weapons
being unable to bear [even a moment's] delay
in the defence of His devotees
protect us!

13

The Three Vedas declared that
if not comprehended, He is comprehended
if comprehended, He is not comprehended
if praised He is defamed
and if defamed He is praised.

How can we praise the King at [Śrī]raṅgam?
We just aren't able to do so!

14

If Raṅgacandra gives me
the innate glory of having a thousand mouths
then just like [the thousand-faced] Śeṣa
or like [Viṣṇu, the thousand-faced Man] Himself
I will take my part in the greatness of
being powerless in praising Him.

15

Indeed, the Veda itself
doubts whether the omniscient Lord Raṅga
[fully] comprehends Himself or not.

[Such a view] is appropriate,
for this very One
covers His lordly eminence
with my words which are dirtied by defects!

16

The One Who loves Śrīraṅgam
Who is Himself shining with songs of praise
from the Sanskrit and Tamil Vedas
dirties Himself with my words.

[But then] who can prevent
a freshly-bathed baby elephant
from enjoying the dust?

17

What makes me offend You
[by composing] this rash hymn of praise?

Is it pride because of [my birth in] a royal lineage
whose strength of surrender [to the Lord]
enabled [our] entire family
to cross over Viṣṇu-*māyā*,
or is it because [as a baby] I was fondled at the feet
of Raṅgarāja and Kamalā?

18

The Veda does not hesitate to say that
even the Lord Himself
[though] shining with knowledge and speech
cannot see the opposite side
of His own great ocean.

If that is the [Veda's] consideration
then let it be mine as well!

Because of this, I have the right to compose
a praise-poem to the One Who delights in Śrī.

19

You can steal from [Viṣṇu's] abundant [qualities]
and use them to extol others
but You can't do that to praise the Lord!

Due to the boundlessness
[of His auspicious qualities]
it is impossible to praise Him!

Even the limitless Vedas
become like drops of rain in the ocean
when they [try to] praise Hari.

The ocean does not benefit
from two drops of water falling into it,
but by falling into the sea

the [two drops of] water can profit
from [the ocean's] good qualities.

20

Let me plunge into the [River] Kāverī
a flawless flood of crystal-clear water
overflowing to remove [all] obstructions
to the enjoyment of God such as
the causes and the fruits of *karma* and pain,
which surrounds Śrīraṅgam in this world
for [the benefit of] the creatures of *saṁsāra*
just like the [River] Virajā
encircles this *saṁsāric* world
with its trembling waters
for the removal of obstacles
to the Path beginning with Light.

21

May that Kāverī be honoured
who [thinking] thus:
“The Father is the Milk Ocean
I [Kāverī] am the Mother
Śrī is our daughter
Lord Śrīraṅga is the bridegroom”
[becomes confused as to] what worthy thing
she can do for such [great] persons as these
and overflows [her banks]
carrying in her wave-like hands
shining piles of pearls, giant gems,
sandal, camphor, and whisks.

22

The River made of gold
purifies the place of pilgrimage,
protects the trees in the garden,
wets the crossroads and streets,

carries water for drinking, worship, and bathing,
purifies the bathers,
reveals the secret of the Vedas
Who is dark on the sand bank
in the middle of the river,
and with her foam crests
appears to be laughing
at the [River] Gaṅgā
who is roaring [with pride]
because she has the feet of Viṣṇu
as her birthplace.

May that Kāverī wash away my sins!

23

Let [the river] that grows taller with the wind
purify us!

Having become a nurturer of the world
she who is sweet, cool, deep, and ever awake
overflows [her banks] just like
the compassion of [Śrī]raṅgam's Lord
satisfying with her flood of waters
all beings lacking any other remedy
without even considering
all their qualities and faults.

24

Filled with water containing nectar
[from the flowers] of betel-nut and coconut trees
and with bees sleeping in the flower-bunches
belonging to the rows of trees on her bank
swaying gently to and fro
[rocked] by tiny rippling billows,
may the river named "Golden"
wash away my sin!

25

Honour the island surrounded by
 the sweet water of the Kāverī
 which covers the trunks of the banana, *bakula*,
 rose-apple, betel-nut, and mango trees
 clear up to their branches,
 whose thicket [of dark trees]
 gives the mistaken impression
 of a group of very thirsty clouds
 hanging down in the middle of the mighty waters!

26

They say that the Supreme Abode of Viṣṇu
 near the [River] Virajā
 a place free from *taṃas* and *rajas*
 and perceptible only by liberated souls
 shines today as that holy island
 on the sand bank in the middle of the Kāverī.

May I see [that island] always!

27

Let me live on Śrīraṅgam's holy garden slopes
 which have people learned in Vedānta,
 are visited by Vaiṣṇavas,
 remove the great troubles of this worldly existence
 and are served by the [River] Kāverī!

28

May [Śrī]raṅgam's lovely and pleasurable places
 dark with banana, jack-fruit and betel-nut trees
 nourished by a canal overflowing with sweet milk
 from the bunches of coconuts
 cracked open by jumping, glistening fish
 give [us] continual enjoyment!

29

They say that the city of the Supreme Heaven
called Ayodhyā and Aparājītā
surrounded by the nectar [of the Virajā River]
shines on the island [in the Kāverī River]
as the capital city of King Raṅga
right before the eyes
of even those with [only] ordinary sight!

30

King Raṅga's capital city
glittering with gem-studded rooftops
and with rows of storied buildings
which connect the two worlds
shines brightly here
as if to make even this transitory world
a divine place.

May it be victorious!

31

Having made the light rays
[glittering] from the *makara*-shaped jewels
on its decorative doorways
into nets for Lakṣmī's new amusement,
[Lord] Raṅga's city
with its hands in the form of fluttering flags
shines brightly as if wishing
to catch the deer on the moon.

May it give us delight!

32

I salute the group of leaders
beginning with Kumuda who
endowed with weapons, attendants, and vehicles

are ever watchful in protecting
the prosperous city [of Śrīraṅgam]
shining on the island in the river
where [our] community [lives].

33

They say that the eternally free souls
who are by nature [the Lord's] servants,
the liberated ones now freed from bondage,
and those with pure and final bodies
dwell eternally here [in Śrīraṅgam]
in the form of great human persons
animals and inanimate objects.

Let there be salutations to them!

34

In this transitory world
we take refuge in Śrīraṅga's Divine Abode which
surrounded by a group of gateways
and rampart walls
appears to be embraced by Garuḍa
hidden in the hollow of his wings
spread in devotion
as if he has taken these various forms.

35

It appears as if the earth has approached
the main sanctuary of [Lord] Raṅga's Temple
with her gem-filled mountains, oceans, and islands
now manifest as compound-walls,
verandahs, and halls.

36

Let us prostrate before the groups of rampart walls
and gem-studded halls
built by the poet Parakāla
in [Lord] Raṅga's town,
as if making Vedic
the jewelled statues of the Jainas and their ilk
who deny the authority of [the Vedas]
and are defeated!

37

I salute Caṇḍa, Pracāṇḍa, and the others who
enjoying [positions] of authority
in the four gateways of [Śrī]raṅgam
with eyes and faces like blossoming lotuses
purify the worshippers
and with long teeth, maces, and frowns
threaten the enemies
[of the Lord and His devotees]!

38

May I reach the hall in the form of bliss
so spacious that it is difficult to fill up
even with the Lord's assembly
common for all souls,
described in the Upaniṣads
by the words beginning with
"the thousand-pillared [hall]".

39

We approach the moon-like lotus pond
[named Candrapuṣkariṇī]
filled with blue lotuses useful as instruments
for fighting and trading
and as ornaments, umbrellas, and play-toys

in Hari's amusing diversions with Lakṣmī
 whose bank removes the tiredness
 resulting from [the Lord's] play
 with the Lotus-Lady
 in the lotus-minds of sages.

40

The moon obtained its quality
 of having [cool] nectar-like rays
 from its repeated connection with the excellence
 of the [lotus-pond's] sin-removing water.

Having plunged into Candrapuṣkariṇī,
 I will extinguish the three kinds of heat!

41

May the most excellent ten persons
 beginning with Parāṅkuṣa
 take pity on me --
 [those persons] who are well-seated
 to the East [of the lotus pond]
 who have the Lord immersed inside [their hearts]
 which are munificent, deep, clear and cool
 like Candrapuṣkariṇī [itself].

42

I must praise Śrīraṅga's Abode
 well-situated on the lotus
 located on the earth's ocean
 which rests on the Serpent's expanded hood
 situated on the Tortoise
 who rests on the *prakṛti maṇḍala*
 which is placed on [Viṣṇu's] supporting power.

43

May I cherish the [Lord's] great shining palace
not of human construction
the treasury of Brahman called Aparājita
situated above the heavens in the city made of gold
[and known] in this world
by the name of Śrīraṅgam!

44

We trust in Śrīraṅgam
a shelter whose glory equals hundreds of Śrutis
and a spot where
free from doubt and illusion
one [can] see the Lord.

Although fulfilling peoples' various desires,
[Śrīraṅgam's] sole intention
is intimate union [with the Lord];
free from the defect
of human construction
it is celebrated as beginningless!

45

May the holy central sanctuary thrill our eyes!
[that *vimāna*] which is none other than
the lord of serpents
who even though he is white
[appears dark because he reflects]
the emerald rays of Lord Raṅga
Who sleeps inside
blacker than a black cloud
which has drunk the water
of the entire ocean!

46

I pray to the figure of the Man-Lion
Who appears atop the temple gateway.

Having made small His all-pervasive form
because of motherly affection for His devotees,
He crossed beyond all norms [in this incarnation]
and was able to kill the enemy [Hiraṇya]!

47

A single light shines before me
on one side clothed in the figure of a man
and on the other charming with the form of a lion
living perpetually atop the temple gateway
[as if to say]:
“I am enough support for people in distress”.

48

After I have taken refuge in
the series of sidelong glances
[emanating from] the gurus
seated on the Lord's left side
[those preceptors] who purify [the worshippers]
by the casting of their holy and charming glances
and make even one like me a fit offering to God,
let me circumambulate
[the Inner Sanctum of the temple].

49

We celebrate the mastwood tree [whose flowers]
plucked by Lakṣmī's own hand
for ear ornaments
from branches bent down
by the hand of Śrīraṅgarāja
possess their own divine perfume

produced by the perpetual outpouring of
[Śaṭhakopa's] thousand songs.

50

Ignoring all else, we turned toward
the army chief [Viṣvaksena] who
having arranged for Raṅgacandra
to pass away the time with Indirā
has the authority to lead all sentient beings
and insentient matter
solely by the gesture of his hand.

51

I approached Mother Sūtravatī
the Army Chief [Viṣvaksena's] wife
whose beautiful creeper-like arms
shine with a serving cloth
marked with red decorative dye
[imprinted] from the feet of Śrī.

52

Eagerly engaged in protecting Śrīraṅgam
on all sides
night and day
and a forest fire to the obstacles
in the form of grass [along the path]
of those who approach [the Lord]
in this transitory world,
may Viṣvaksena's chief servants
Karimukha, Jayatsena,
Kālāhva, and Siṃhamukha
give us happiness.

53

We take shelter with the embodiment of Śruti
 whose face blooming with modesty
 and excessive happiness
 resembles an auspicious mirror of precious gems.

Upon seeing His own essential form, nature,
 and majesty [reflected there]
 the One reclining in [Śrī]raṅgam rejoices!

54

I honour Sukirti along with Rudrā
 Garuḍa's two consorts who
 [seated on either side of him]
 look like his two wings.

Through these two
 may Kamalā bless her suppliants
 with fame and tears of joy.

55

We praise the group of five warriors
 each of whom [wears] a crown
 shining with the form of his own weapon
 which causes the gods to tremble [with fear]
 by the threatening hand gesture
 not to make noise.

Eyes red from lack of sleep,
 they are ever awake
 [protecting] the Lord's slumber
 by wandering about
 [guarding the temple].

56

I take refuge with [Viṣṇu's] discus [Sudarśana]
leader of the group of weapons
whose body
stained from the cutting of demons
bears a circle of flames spinning around and around
delightful because
its extraordinary dance of drunkenness
is caused by the Lord's honey-wine glances!

57

May I belong to Hanumān and Vibhīṣaṇa who
having abandoned Final Liberation
[remain here and] thus gladden
the Treasure of [Śrī]raṅgam
Who is the Raghu Chief's equivalent in this world.

58

I [now] proceed to the bamboo cane
which directs us away from ordinary objects
to that endlessly enjoyable person [Śrīraṅgarāja].

Now let my five senses
which may be turned toward other things
when outside of this [temple]
be subject inside [its Inner Sanctum]
to that which is right before them!

59

We approach the pair of fragrant pillars
useful as a support for people staggering about
bewildered by the speed
of the nectar-stream of sidelong glances
[flowing out from the eyes of]
the One Who reclines on Śeṣa.

60

May we see Śrīraṅgam's Inner Sanctum which
 holding the shining Śeṣa
 and the beautiful bridegroom of Śrī and Bhūmi
 resembles an open jewelry-box
 containing Śrī's divine ornaments.

61

We praise [the ladies]
 who hold in the fingertips of their hands
 daggers and creepers used for play
 and small golden vessels and spitons

whose breasts are adorned
 with serving cloths

and who massage the lotus-feet
 [of Śrī and Bhūmi].

62

May I honour also the nine [ladies]
 beginning with Vimalā
 who resemble a beautiful moon-lit night
 with one hand like a closed lotus blossom
 [placed] on the head saluting [God]
 and the other [holding] a chowrie
 [used] for serving [the Lord].

63

Here [in the Inner Sanctum]
 may I approach Śrīraṅgarāja
 Who is like a pool filled
 with fully-bloomed lotuses
 and those at His right and left --
 Lakṣmī
 who delights in playing like a royal white swan

and the Earth [Goddess]
who resembles [Śrī's] growing shadow.

64

O eye!
Drink in this pool of blossoming lotuses
named the Foremost One of [Śrī]raṅgam
[present] right before you
[in the Inner Sanctum].

Look also at Lakṣmī
who is playing in this [pond]
like a royal swan
and at [Bhūmi], the sustainer of all the worlds,
who looks like her reflection.

65

We have plunged into a rainy-season's
lush lotus pond
that is Śrīraṅgarāja
naturally deep, clear and bright,
made fragrant by Lakṣmī,
and cool with gracious condescension
like the billows of His boundless compassion
in which the whole [world] bathes.

66

Let me enjoy [Śrīraṅgarāja]
proud because of the richness of His youthfulness,
auspiciousness, and beauty
made fruitful by his own choice
of Lakṣmī [as consort]

Who sits on the throne
along with Śrī and Kṣamā

in order to bring the entire world
under one umbrella

and Who is my very life!

67

Without a moment's interruption
may we enjoy Śrīraṅgarāja
Who creates affection in the hearts of all people
by the features of His body
 overflowing with friendliness and autonomy
shining brightly from His feet
 up to His jewelled crown!

68

In the prime of youth
 rising up in ten directions,
playfully embracing the desire-granting creepers
 that are the Earth [Goddess] and
 the [Lady] who lives in the lotus,
covered with leaves and bent down
 with fruits in the form of boons
 according to each person's desire,
let the heavenly boon-bestowing tree
 known as the Splendour of [Śrī]raṅgam
take away my tiredness.

69

May I reach my Auspicious Refuge
 the Munificent One Who dwells in [Śrī]raṅgam
Who is as if speaking to me with His glance
 and His gentle, sweet smile
 attractive to everyone
Whose four arms are blossoming
 with the divine weapons.

70

Let the One in Śrīraṅgam
Who is capable of bearing all things
bear my burden --
He Who seems to be saying with his smiling face
and revealing by His hand
positioned in a gesture of fearlessness:
“Oh people, these hands of mine
which carry a conch, a mace,
and [the discus named] Sudarśana bless [you].
These two feet of mine are
your refuge, security, and blessing”.

71

Oh how can I understand
[Śrī]raṅgam's Foremost One Who
with limbs perfumed
with the pride of youth's prime
resembles the heavenly boon-bestowing tree
which has hundreds of newly-spreading branches
offering themselves [to the devotees as if to say]:
“[Enjoy] me first, [enjoy] me first”?

72

O Ornament of Śrīraṅgam!
Your tender-hearted sidelong glances,
Your words and gentle smile
the master [of all] because of its charm
provide shade [for people in the heat of *saṁsāra*].

Your body is the heart's goal
of [the Lady] who lives in the lotus
and your movements [are pleasing] to the eyes.

All these [thoughts] are
fragrant with a youthfulness
that makes tender our hearts.

What more [could we desire]?

73

We worship Lord Raṅga Who has a tall crown,
an *ūrdhvaṇḍra* mark shining on His forehead,
long eyes reaching to His
beautiful long and flawless ears,
a well-developed chest,
hands holding the [divine] weapons,
a celebrated waist-cloth
and lotus-feet.

74

Everywhere in Śrīraṅgam for a hundred years
may we see Lakṣmī's husband Who has
lotus-feet placed on the lotus-[seat],
a silken cloth fit to His curved hips,
a body-posture touched with
the fragrance of the dance,
a natural and gentle smile,
a lotus-face touching His crown
and divine weapons resting in His hands.

75

We shelterless ones take refuge with
Raṅgarāja Who presents Himself for all [to see] --
Who has a bird [Garuda] in front of Him
and is Himself reclining behind
on the lord of serpents
Whose face with its gentle smile
[pours forth] a flood of nectar
being enjoyed without saturation

by the deep eyes of Śrī and Bhūmi
who are on either side [of Him]
with His hands in a gesture inviting fearlessness,
shining with mace, conch, and discus.

76

May we take shelter with
the Lord at Śrīraṅgam

a refuge for persons who
wish to recover lost wealth

a boon-bestowing tree to people who
desire new things

the place of patience for the those who
commit unbearable offences

and a cow of plenty for those who
approach [Him] spontaneously
and for whom He is all.

He is our wealth
Kamalā's eye
and Bhūmi's life.

May He bring joy in Śrīraṅgam
for a long long time
and make me His servant.

77

Bowed down before a couch-swing
formed by the lord of serpents
which is moving to and fro [rocked]
by the slow breathing in and breathing out
[of Ādiśeṣa]
who is proud to be holding Raṅgam's wealth

sleeping happily
 on his fragrant, soft, bright coils
 which resemble a beautiful garland
 surrounded by the splendour of a canopy
 composed of jewels shining out
 from Śeṣa's expanded hood,
 we are revived!

78

May I worship the Supreme Person
 the remover of the troubles of the devotees
 and the bestower of boons
 featured with broad arms and long eyes
 Who reclines [here] in the Abode of [Śrī]raṅgam
 which is none other than
 the banyan leaf
 the womb of Devakī
 the pinnacle of the Vedas
 the breast of Kamalā
 and the speech of Śaṭhakopa.

79

May the Supreme Person think of us!
 [He] Whose eyes throb
 from the heavy and regular
 breathing in and breathing out
 of the excellent lord of serpents.

Having forgotten the [Milk] Ocean
 and the Supreme Heaven,
 He sleeps the sleep (*nidrā*)
 that is interchangeable with
 the [Lady] who lives among the lotuses [Nidrā]
 in the place called Śrīraṅgam.

80

I salute the Person
with lotus-like feet, hands, and eyes
Who reclines on a serpent
in the dark abode [of the Inner Sanctum].

Black in colour, He looks like
an ocean drunk by a cloud
a mountain placed in the sea
or an elephant sleeping
in the bushes of a mountain.

81

May the One sleeping here in Śrīraṅgam
Who possesses corals in the form
of His reddish lips, feet, and palms
and resembles a profound, wonderful baby-ocean
fondled by [its mother's] hands
in the form of the Kāverī's waves
delight us here in this world.

82

Resembling a cool black rain-cloud
because He is filled with the waters of compassion,
bearing the bow of Indra
in the rays of brightness
[shining out from] His jewelled ornaments,
and having Indirā as lightning,
may the One sleeping on a mountain
in the Śrīraṅgam Abode
rain on me.

83

We drink in with our eyes once again
as if He is a flood of ambrosia

flowing into the minds
 of those who see Him
 the One with long, gentle and attractive limbs
 Who sleeps on Śeṣa
 with the splendour [of every part of His body]
 growing greater and greater
 from His *makara*-shaped crown jewel
 clear down to His feet!

84

Raṅgacandra
 Who acquires the quality of a lotus
 because of His feet, hands and face,
 the beauty of green trees
 by the loveliness of His limbs,
 and the quality of a red flower blossom
 by his lips,
 resembles an eternal divine garden
 for [the delight of] Śrī.

85

Radiant from rejoicing in each other,
 the divine garland of forest flowers,
 waist-cloth, ornaments, and fragrant unguents
 on [the Lord's] body
 incomparably beautiful
 because they are in the form of *cit*
 have bristled with rapture
 from the touch [of His body]
 and thereby increase
 the Moon of [Śrī]raṅgam's abundant splendour!

86

A multitude of emerald rays
 advancing themselves like waves
 spreading out from an ocean

mixed with a mountain of molten gold
in the form of the One Who reclines on Śeṣa
wash over this person
and remove his [inner] darkness!

87

The Leader of [Śrī]raṅgam's delightful fragrance
perfumed by His supreme lordship
[obtained through His] eternal embrace of Śrī
and augmented by the sweet scent
of the breathing of the king of serpents
has overflowed the limit in all directions
and causes the minds [of His devotees]
to sink into an abundance of bliss!

88

The tenderness [Śrī]raṅgam's Protector
that causes us to record
even the very mention of our looking at Him
in the lists of rash actions
and which accounts for His name "Puṣpahāsa"
transcends our speech and mind.

89

O foolish eye!

Don't engage in useless doubts
[thinking] thus:
"How will I see [and hence enjoy]
all of Him [at once]
[when I am completely] immersed
in the boundless beauty
of each and every one of His parts?"

The very loveliness
which connects Śrīraṅgarāja's limbs

in good friendship
will cause you, [O eye], to ripen into
one who is fully familiar with
[the enjoyment of] all [of Him] at once!

90

The eternal youthfulness
of the Moon of Raṅgam's body
like the season of the appearance
of the boon-bestowing tree's first bloom,
honey which intoxicates all the senses
of the bees that are Kṣamā and Lakṣmī,
the blossoming of a garland of beauty,
and a vessel of delicious intoxicating liquor
makes fragrant [our] good fortune.

91

Revealing His imperial lordship,
the row of jewels [shining]
on the crown and diadem
of the One Who is fond of Śrī
resembles waves of splendour
spreading upward from the moon of His face.

92

We consider Lord Raṅga's gem-studded crown
the top of which gleams with
a *makara*-shaped ruby
diffusing the light of the crest jewel
in all directions
a lovely [mountain] pleasure garden high and broad
for the glory of the Emperor *cit* and *acit*.

We think of the crest gems as
a ridge surrounding that garden.

93

May the face
of the One Who is fond of Śrī
which destroys the pride of
nectar-pool, moon, or lotus
and is luminous with crest jewel and forehead curl
tilaka, *ūrdhvapuṇḍra* mark,
and a pure, beautiful and gentle smile
roam about in me for enjoyment.

94

Lord Raṅga's pearl-surrounded *tilaka* ornaments
[resemble] lotus filaments above
His three-lined lotus-like face.

His forehead curls
bear the beauty of bees
approaching that [lotus-face].

95

Lord Ranga's *ūrdhvapuṇḍra* mark
is so lovely and sweet
that I am confused as to whether it is
[a forehead mark]
or a stream of ambrosia flowing out from
the half-moon of His forehead.

96

Lord Raṅga's eyebrows flash forth
moving in amorous dance above His eyes
like two rows of big black bees facing downwards
dancing in drunkenness
above two lotus-blossoms.

97

When Lord Raṅga's eyes are mistaken for
 the god of love's lotus-flower arrows
 His eyebrows
 splendorous like sugarcane bows
 bent over His eyes
 shine [with pride] like a *gurukula* of the glory
 of His dancing [bow named] Śārṅga.

98

[The devotees] know that at the outset
 the two eyes of the Leader of [Śrī]raṅgam
 were so long that they spread clear up to His ears.

With supreme compassion
 His entire body is going to change
 completely and in all ways
 into eyes!

99

Broad, large, long and lovely,
 cool white [streaked] with light red,
 swinging clear up to the obstruction
 of His ears and nose,
 and charming like a pair of glistening fish
 fighting with each other, darting [here and there],
 may the lotus-eyes of Śrīraṅgam's Beloved
 take pity on me.

100

O Wealth of [Śrī]raṅgam!
 Overflowing their banks
 with the nectar of compassion
 and welcoming the ones who have bowed down,
 let fall upon me

rows of billows from Your river-like eyes
which are clear, cool
and spread up to Your ears.

101

The nose of the One
Who makes His abode in [Śrī]raṅgam
shines like a lovely young desire-yielding creeper.

His smile resembles
that [creeper's] fresh flower,
and His cheeks and chin
glitter like its tender leaves sprouting forth.

102

Out of anger at being caught
in the net of His ears
and at being struck
by the glittering fish of His eyes,
the great *makara*-shaped gem-studded earrings
moving to and fro near the shore
of [the Lord's] shoulders
which have moss-like plants
in the form of hair curls
hanging down on all sides of
the nectar-ocean-like Leader of Raṅgam's [face],
[appear to be] ejecting lustre
in the form of bunches of flower blossoms!

103

May the pool that is the Moon of [Śrī]raṅgam's
face
which has lovely lotuses for lips
lotus-stems for beautiful long ears
glittering fish for eyes
a moss creeper for a nose

makaras for earrings
and a border of black forest for rows of curls
remain in me forever.

104

May the Leader of Śrīraṅgam's neck
give me delight!

[that neck] which robs the beauty of
[the three-lined] conch and
the tender trunk of a stately betel-nut tree,
glittering as if its [three] lines
have been playfully imprinted
from the golden bracelets
belonging to the banana-stem arms
of Lakṣmī and Bhūmī
who are embracing [Him] with love.

105

May the Beloved One of Raṅgam's powerful arms
bestow fearlessness upon me,
[those arms that are]

supporting pillars
for the world's expansive cosmic plan
posts to which the female elephant Kamalā is tied
pestles for destroying the elephant-herd of enemies
and a cause of confusion [as to which is which]
when joined together
with the Serpent King
and the flourishing garland.

106

We worship
the long and ever generous arms of Śrīraṅga
Who out of eagerness [to see] Vibhīṣaṇa
reclines on the shore facing the ocean
with one arm extended as if to honour him again
and the other placed like a pillow
on the Serpent Chief.

107

We approach the arms of Raṅga Who
free from [all] troubles
sleeps soundly on the Serpent.

Placed on a raised crystal platform, [those arms]
which have tender new leaves
in the form of many-jewelled rings
golden bracelets, and armlets
and are bent from bearing
an abundance of flower blossoms,
appear to be laughing at the branches
of the heavenly boon-bestowing tree.

108

They resemble two *kautaka* threads
in their resolution to protect me;

they reveal [the Lord's] bravery
by the rough scars made by His bracelets
and the bowstring [named] Śāṅga;

they allured Kamalā with a smoothness
that she mistook
for that of a beautiful garland and,
[becoming] a pillow for her amusing play,
are imprinted with her curls.

The arms of the One Who adheres to Śrīraṅgam
excel [all others].

109

I take refuge with the lotus-hand
of the One Who sleeps in Śrīraṅgam
which seems [to be] directing
persons afflicted by the heat [of *saṁsāra*]
to the nectar-pool of His face.

His face appears to indicate that this hand,
used by Him as a pillow,
and red with [jealous] anger
toward the lotus clusters
[that compete with it in loveliness]
is itself the bestower of boons.

110

Made into a pillow
by the One Who reclines in Śrīraṅgam,
one arm touched His crown and says:
“This crown is fit for Him
because of His lordship
over Brahmā and Śiva”.

The other arm, touching the knees,
reaches toward His lotus-feet and proclaims:
“[These feet] are the chief refuge
of the lowly”.

111

I adore Raṅga's all-forbearing chest
anointed with sandal paste and camphor --
Lakṣmī's house of play with its
jasmine garland for a bed,
jewels for a canopy,

kaustubha gem for an auspicious lamp,
and marks made by the bull-like demon
[Ariṣṭa's] horns for pictures.

112

May we look upon
the Resident of [Śrī]raṅgam's chest

which has the greatness of the ocean
churned with Mount Mandara,

is wonderful because of its boundless opulence
manifesting the *kaustubha* gem, Lakṣmī
and a multitude of jewels spreading here and there

rich because it possesses
blossoming garlands for foam,
rows of bright rays for lines of waves,
and is cloudy with strings of pearls for mist.

113

[Resting] on the chest of [Śrī]raṅgam's Splendour,
the holy garland [of basil], Kamalā,
the *kaustubha* jewel, and Vaijayantī
clearly exhibit His lordliness over all.

So be it!

What really delights us is
the contemplation of the string
containing [Viṣṇu's] five weapons
joined with the nails of a turtle and tigress
tied [around Kṛṣṇa's waist] by Yaśodā
as an ornament of childhood!

114

The All-pervasive One's stomach seems emaciated
because of [His continuing] dissatisfaction
[expressed] thus:

“How great a burden
can the earth and the group of Cosmic Eggs
be for me?”

So the lotus from His navel
is creating yet another series of worlds
[more] fit [for fulfilling] His desire to protect.

115

The three lines appearing
on the great Lord Raṅga's belly
which seem to be counting
the three kinds of *cit* and *acit*¹
reveal His sovereignty [over all].

The mark that gives Him the name Dāmodara
declares that He is under the control
of His devotees.

His waist-cord is like an edict bound [around Him
in order to show His greatness]
both [as Controller and Controlled].

116

Refuting illogical arguments
that the three gods are equal
the three gods are one and inseparable
the Supreme Reality is greater than the three gods,
the lotus from the navel of the All-pervasive Lord
the primary cause
of [gods such as] Brahmā and Rudra
establishes the real truth for us that
all things other than That One

are dependent upon
the contraction of His eyebrows
[for their very existence].

117

The navel on the ocean that is
the One Who makes His home in [Śrī]raṅgam
which keeps all the worlds inside itself
in order to protect them
surely wishes to be like a sinking whirlpool.

The navel-lotus which brings out those [worlds
as if trying] to see [them]
becomes a rising whirlpool.

118

What can be compared
to the Elephant of Raṅgam's two thighs
so swollen with pride
at having surpassed [in beauty]
the insolence of a banana stem
a gracefully tapering hand
and an elephant's trunk
that they seem as if they have just now subdued
the arrogance of Madhu and Kaiṭabha?

119

The golden garment of [Śrī]raṅgam's Friend
with a jewelled belt-ornament put around it
and glittering with a knot well-suited
to the beauty of His waist
shines like the gem-filled slope of [Mount] Meru
licked by a huge cloud.

120

Our mind drinks in
 the Leader of [Śrī]raṅgam's golden garment
 bright like the halo of ocean
 surrounding the Golden Land
 and a chain of lightning [flashing] in the sky
 amidst a cluster of clouds at dusk.

121

I think that the loveliness belonging to the limbs
 of the One Who makes His lofty abode
 in auspicious Raṅgam --
 immersed in the splendour
 of His ornaments spreading on all sides
 and in a state of intoxication --
 has become transformed at one place
 into His pair of knees.

122

The two shins
 of the One who reclines in Śrīraṅgam
 which experience horripilation
 from the thrill [felt]
 during their massage by Śrī and Bhūmi
 rival in loveliness a pair of fleshy lotus stems
 on account of [the goddesses']
 amorous amusement.

123

Let me meditate on and praise the lotus-feet
 of [Śrī]raṅgam's Protector
 which have a redness seemingly reflected
 from the row of crowns
 belonging to the gods
 bowing down [before them],
 from the minds of yogis,

or from [their massage
by] the two hands of Kamalā.

124

The master of Bṛndāvana
which learned to dance
to the [musical] sound
of the churning of curds,
the foot of the One Who delights in Śrī
is a witness to the happiness of Lakṣmī's hands,
has an excellence rivaling the lotus,
does not discriminate among the devotees
be they high or low,
and is fond of its role as messenger.

May that most excellent foot of Viṣṇu
bless us.

125

I worship the lotus-feet
of the One Who sleeps in Śrīraṅgam
beautiful with marks of the thunder-bolt,
lotus, flag, umbrella, boon-granting tree,
conch, diamond, discus, and mirror
and with the tinkling sounds
of His jewelled toe-rings;
they are [the embodiment] of Śruti
which again and again reveal by their sovereignty
His victory beginning with the three strides
[taken to measure the worlds].

126

Let us dive day and night
into the splendour of the toenails
of the One Who delights in Śrī
which are a fresh cluster of blossoms

on the beautiful boon-bestowing tree-sprouts
 of His feet
 and are a cause of confusion as to whether
 [they are really His nails]
 or a row of Gaṅgā billows
 flowing out from all His toes
 [making the sound] “swish, swish”
 as if to say:
 “I [the Gaṅgā],
 spreading in many different directions,
 will purify all the worlds.”

127

I salute the Moon of [Śrī]raṅgam’s feet
 lovely like two closely placed tender leaves
 [decorated] with golden lotuses
 offered by Rāma and Sītā
 which [cause me] confusion
 as to whether they are [lotuses]
 or the faces of Brahmā
 bowed down before Him in daily worship,
 and which wear blue-jewelled tinkling anklets
 surpassing [in beauty] blue lotuses
 with swarms of big black honey-sipping bees
 clinging to their flower-stems.

NOTES

- 1 “Marriage-thread” (*maṅgala-sūtra*) is “a thread tied by the bridegroom around the bride’s neck, and worn as long as the husband lives” (M-W, 773).
- 2 This *śloka* is the official *guruparamparā* verse for Empār, known also by the name Śrīgovinda Dāsar, Rāmānuja’s immediate disciple and Bhaṭṭar’s Ācārya. Empār belonged to the same Brahmin subsect (Vaṭama) as did his Ācārya and

his disciple. He is reported never to have married, and is said to have composed one non-extant work called *Vijñāna Stuti* (PTA, 584).

“Long live [Govind]” or “May [Govind] live long” (*jīyāt*) is a common blessing in Sanskrit literature. Note, however, that the style is also that of the Tamil *pallāṇṭu*. The phrase “May you live long...” is found in each and every verse of Periyālvār’s *Tiruppallāṇṭu*.

- 4 The reference to Yāmuna’s “removing the thorn from the Vedic path in the form of the persons who argue unreasonably” is more than likely a reference to his defence of the authoritativeness of the Pāñcarātra Āgamas entitled *Āgama Prāmāṇyam*.
- 6 Bhaṭṭar describes Nammālvār as a seer (*ṛṣi*), thus connecting him with the inspired *ṛṣis* to whom the Vedas were revealed.

“Tamil Veda” (*drāviḍim brahma-saṁhitām*). *Brahma* means “the sacred word, the Veda, a sacred text”; *saṁhitā* means “conjunction, connection, union...a text treated according to euphonic rules (esp. the real continuous text of the Vedas as formed out of the Padas or separate words by proper phonetic changes...any methodically arranged collection of texts or verses)” (M-W, 737 and 1123).

- 7 This verse is part of the official Śrīvaiṣṇava *guruparamparā*.
- 8 This verse is part of the official Śrīvaiṣṇava *guruparamparā*.

Note the reversal imagery. Ordinarily, Śrī is imaged as an ornament on the chest of Nārāyaṇa. In this verse, however, He is said to be “an ornament on the breast of Śrī”.

- 13 Compare with KUp, v. 1: “It is known to him to whom It is unknown; he does not know to whom It is known. It is unknown to those who know well, and known to those who do not know” (*Eight Upaniṣads* 1957: 51).

Although *nindā-stuti* is found in the Veda, to my knowledge there is no “praise-defamation” passage similar to the one in this verse. The reference, therefore, would appear to be to the Tamil Veda of the Ālvārs. See, for example, Nammālvār, PTAnt, v. 2, in which praise is said to be abuse, and abuse is said to indicate respect.

- 14 Bhaṭṭar calls the Lord at Śrīraṅgam Raṅgacandra in this and several other stanzas, perhaps playing on Lord Śrīraṅga's special association with Lord Rāma, Who is often lovingly called Rāmacandra.

The image of "the Person with a thousand heads" is from PSū.

- 15 As in v. 14, the idea expressed here -- that even Nārāyaṇa is unable to praise Himself adequately -- is based on the suggestion that God cannot fully know Himself: "The Lord of the universe who lives in the Great Sky knows Himself, or perhaps even He does not know" (TaittBrāh 2.8.9).

- 16 "With songs of praise from the Sanskrit and Tamil Vedas" (*saṁskṛta-drāviḍa-veda-sūktaiḥ*). The term *sūkta* is used by Bhaṭṭar to indicate a form of Vedic praise in BhGD, No. 693.

- 17 "surrender" (*prapatti*). The connection of surrender with the crossing of Viṣṇu-*māyā* is based on BhG 7.14-15: "This *māyā* of Mine, composed of the three *guṇas*, is difficult to cross...those who take refuge with/surrender to Me alone (*māmeva ye prapadyante*) cross beyond this *māyā*".

Bhaṭṭar's reference to being "fondled at the feet of Raṅgarāja and Kamalā (Śrī)" would appear to be the origin of the later story found in all major Śrīvaiṣṇava hagiographical texts, which identify Parāśara Bhaṭṭar as the son of Śrīraṅgarāja. Note, however, that he refers to himself as the son of Śrīvatsacihna Mīśra (Kūreśa) in v. 1.

- 20 "Path beginning with Light" (*arcirādi-saraṇi*). For Rāmānuja's exposition of *arcirādi-mārga*, see ŚrīBh IV. 4.1.

- 21 Praise of the Kāverī River by way of poetic description is a common feature in the DP. For an example containing imagery identical to that in this verse see Kulacēkara Ālvār, PmāṭTM 1.1, in which the river is described as touching Lord Raṅga's feet with her "wave-like hands" (*tiraikkaiyāl*). See also Tirumaṅkai Ālvār's PTM 5.4.9, in which the Kāverī's waters are described as bringing pearls and precious gems (*muttum maṇiyum*).

- 22 The name "Golden River" or "River made of gold" (*hemāpaga*) is a direct translation from the well-known Tamil name of the Kāverī River, Poṇṇi. This name fre-

- quently appears both in the DP and in Cōḷa inscriptions. See, for example, Kulacēkara Āḷvār, PmāḷTM 1.1.
- 23 “She...who is ever awake” (*anujagrātī*) is a phrase usually used to describe a mother who remains awake in order to watch over her baby. It is used in this verse to express the ever-vigilant, motherly compassion of God.
- 24 “the river named “Golden” (*kanaka-nāṃnīmnagā*). See v. 22.
- Many of the Āḷvārs describe Śrīraṅgam as being in or surrounded by a garden. For nature imagery similar to that contained in this stanza, see PĀTM 2.9.10: “Araṅkam is... in a garden buzzing with intoxicated bees”. See also 3.3.2, 4.8.4 and 4.8.5.
- 29 Ayodhyā is described as “the city of the gods” and as “a city surrounded by eternally free souls” in *Arthva Veda* 10.2. 31. “Ayodhyā is the city of the gods. It has a treasury filled with gold. Brahma entered the city made of gold which is known as Aparājītā” (*puram hiraṇmayim viveśa aparājitā ityādi brahmā*) (*Taittirīya Aranyaka* 1.27, quoted in Bhaṭṭar’s BhGD, No. 71).
- 30 The tall, many-storied buildings of Śrīraṅgam are a popular image with the Āḷvārs. For example, see Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār, PTM 5.4.7, in which the tall buildings of Śrīraṅgam are said to touch the clouds.
- 31 “Deer on the moon” refers to the spots on the moon which are thought by Hindus to resemble a deer or an antelope.
- 32 In the stanzas which follow, Bhaṭṭar follows the customary route to reach the Inner Sanctum. As a reverent devotee, he salutes each of the icons dwelling in the shrines along the way.
- 33 As in YMD 8.24, the liberated souls depicted by Bhaṭṭar have the power to roam all over the worlds (see also YMD 1.4). In this authoritative text, those desirous of liberation are listed in the category of the “bound” (*baddha*) even though they live “as if liberated”. Bhaṭṭar, on the other hand, puts them in the category of the “eternals”. See Nayar 1981 for a discussion of the concept of “as if liberated”.
- 35 “central sanctuary” (*vimāna*); “compound walls, verandas and halls” (*prakāra-madhya-ajira-maṇḍapa*).

36 According to a famous hagiographical story, Parakāla (Tirumaṅkai Ālvār) stole an image from Nāgapaṭṇam and the money it brought in was used for the construction of one of the rampart walls of the Śrīraṅgam Temple. For the full story, see GPP 1975:81-82.

37 Usually Śrīvaiṣṇava temples have only two doorkeepers (or gatekeepers), but Śrīraṅgam Temple has eight. The gatekeepers of the East are Caṇḍa and Pracāṇḍa, of the South are Bhadra and Subhadra, of the West are Jaya and Vijaya, and of the North are Dhaṭṭ and Vidhaṭṭ (Hari Rao 1967: 101-102). It is necessary to get their permission (by saluting) to enter into the temple. Because Bhaṭṭar salutes Caṇḍa and Pracāṇḍa, we know that he has entered the temple through the East door.

38 “Common for all souls” (*sarvātma-sādharaṇa*) refers to the fact that the Lord takes to Himself not just people of great merit, but all persons who surrender to Him.

The “thousand-pillared hall” of the Śrīraṅgam Temple is modeled on the one in Vaiṣṇava, described in *Tavakara Upaniṣad*: “the Lord of the gods, Nārāyaṇa, sits in the thousand-pillared [hall]” (*sahasra-sthane*).

39 Candrapuṣkariṇī is a small circular tank near the main part of the Śrīraṅgam Temple. To its west is a large pipal tree and a pillared verandah (Hari Rao 1967: 42-3). During the final day of the Brahmotsava festival, Śrīraṅgarāja is taken in procession outside the temple, and when he returns Śrī and Bhūmi look for signs of his having been with another woman. The scene, acted out in the temple, includes a lovers’ quarrel in which Śrīraṅgarāja and Śrī fight with flowers gathered from the lotus pond.

40 For “the three kinds of heat”, see VRS, v. 72.

41 This verse refers to the icons of the Ālvārs situated around the central shrine of Śrīraṅgarāja, evidence to the fact that this shrine existed at the time of Bhaṭṭar.

42 “the supporting power” (*ādhāra-śakti*).

The imagery in this stanza is taken from the directions for meditation during the performance of worship (*pūjā-vidhi*) according to Pāñcarātra. Bhaṭṭar deals with the same topic in BhGD in the section relating to the epithets of Kūrma or

- the Tortoise incarnation of Viṣṇu, Nos. 19-21. Compare also to Rāmaṇuja's NG.
- 43 See n. 29.
- 44 "intimate union [with the Lord]" (*sāyujya*). See ŚVS, n. 42.
- 46 The phrase "who crossed all norms" refers to Narasiṁha's extraordinary peculiarities among the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. He had the body of a man but the head of a lion; even more extraordinary was his emergence from a pillar.
- 49 "Mastwood tree" (*punnāga*; Tamil, *punnai*) "a tree with beautifully scented flowers, *calophyllum inophyllum*" (MTL, V, 2814). Śrīvaiṣṇava scholars meet underneath this tree on the banks of Candrapuṣkariṇī even today for their theological discussions, including oral commentary on Nammālvār's TVM.
- 50 "The gesture of his hand" (*aṅguli-mudra*) refers to that position of the hand in which the final three fingers are bent and the index finger is pointed up; it is said to be the means by which Viṣvaksena controls the world.
- 51 A "serving cloth" (*protā*) is used by Sūtravātī to touch up and dry the decorative marks which she applies to Śrī's feet.
- 52 Alternative names for three of the four servants of Viṣvaksena are: Gajanana (Karimukha), Kālāprakṛti (Kālāhva), and Harivaktra (Siṁhamukha). They are mentioned under these alternative names in Rāmaṇuja, NG. They are saluted -- both in the temple and in the home *pūjā* ceremony -- before approaching Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in order to remove any obstacles blocking the path of His devotees.
- 53 This stanza praises the Lord's attendant and vehicle Garuḍa, who is regarded as an embodiment of the Veda. The origins of this idea are to be found in *Yājurveda Saṁhitā* 12.4, in which the various parts of his body are described as corresponding to the various divisions of the Veda.
Yāmuna's SR, v. 41, says that Garuḍa is "composed of the Three [Vedas]" (*trayī-maya*). Bhaṭṭar's stanza contains the wording *śruti-maya*.
- 54 The consorts of Garuḍa are found only in the temple at Śrīraṅgam (From an interview with Prof. K.K.A. Venkatachari, April 1987).

Note the play on words: Sukirti gives fame (*kirti*) and Rudrā (which means “the crier”) gives “tears of joy” (*harṣa-vāṣpa*).

- 55 “Group of five warriors” lit. “five weapons” is a reference to the personifications of the Lord’s weapons.

Compare this verse with PĀTM 5.1.9, in which the author addresses the weapons of the Lord, telling them to perform their duty of protecting Him, with the words “Don’t sleep! don’t sleep! don’t sleep!” (*uraka! uraka! uraka!*).

“the threatening hand gesture” (*tarjani-mudra*).

- 57 Śrīvaiṣṇavas believe that Hanumān and Vibhīṣaṇa refuse liberation in Vaikuṇṭha so that they might serve Śrīraṅgarāja in Śrīraṅgam. Whenever there is a public reading of the Rāmāyaṇa, an empty seat is reserved in the front row for Hanumān, who, it is believed, comes to listen to the story of Lord Rāma.

- 58 Even today a bamboo cane is placed across the entrance to the inner part of the Inner Sanctum of the Śrīraṅgam Temple so that only rightful persons may approach the temple icon.

- 59 There are four golden pillars just outside the inner part of the Inner Sanctum of the Śrīraṅgam Temple. Standing between two of them, you have a direct view of the face of Śrīraṅgarāja.

This verse is based on Kulacēkara Āḷvār, PmāḷTM 1.2, in which the poet asks when, holding onto the two pillars (*maṇattūṇē*), he can praise Lord Māyon Who sleeps on the serpent couch.

- 60 “Beautiful bridegroom” (*ramya-jāmāṭṛ*) is a translation from Kulacēkara Āḷvār, PmāḷTM 3.5: “beautiful bridegroom” (*aḷakiya maṇavāḷa*).

- 61 “Vessels made of gold” (*patadgrahāḥ*) refers to the golden vessels into which water is poured after being used to bathe Śrīraṅgarāja.

- 62 For the nine ladies beginning with Vimalā, see also Rāmānuja, NG, and Bhaṭṭar, KD, Nos. 28-29. In both texts, Vimalā and the other attendants are described as holding a chowries or whisks (*cāmara*) in their hands. Both the

temple *pūjā* ceremony and the daily home ritual is performed not only for God, but for His servants as well.

- 66 “My life” (*asmadasūn*) is based on Nammālvār’s TVM 7.2.9, in which he calls out to Śrīraṅgarāja “O my life” (*eṇṇuṭaiyāviyē*).

The phrase “in order to bring the entire world under one umbrella” is an expression of royal imagery; Hindu kings often sit under an umbrella which functions as a symbol of the unity of the kingdom.

- 72 This verse begins the section on Bhaṭṭar’s exit from the temple.

- 74 “For one hundred years” is a Vedic expression based on the ideal life span of 100 years. It is a standard formula for blessing.

- 75 “by the deep eyes” (*nayana-culukaniḥ*, lit., “by eyes like *culukas*”). *Culuka* denotes a small, deep, eye-shaped vessel used in the *pūjā* ritual. Here it refers to the depth of the eyes.

- 76 The reference to four kinds of persons who approach the Lord is based on BhG 7:16: “O Great One among the Bhāratas (Arjuna), the four kinds of virtuous men who worship me are the distressed (*ārta*), the one desirous of knowledge (*jijñāsu*), the seeker of wealth (*arthārthi*), and the wise (*jñāni*)”.

The words “Kamalā’s eye” refer to the fact that the Lord is very essential and precious to Kamalā (Śrī).

- 77 Acting as the bed or couch of Śrīraṅgarāja is one of the many services which Ādiśeṣa performs for the Lord. This is brought out well in Poykai Ālvār’s MTA, v. 53, which says that Ādiśeṣa acts as an umbrella for the Lord when He is walking, a throne when He is seated, shoes when He is standing, and a bed on the vast ocean. He also acts as a beautiful lamp, a beautiful and smooth silk cloth, and so forth.

Note the play on words: “We are revived” (*aśvasimāḥ*) can also mean “we breathe again or freely”. In other words, the breathing in and out of Ādiśeṣa which rocks the swinging couch enables us to now “breathe again” or “breathe freely”.

- 79 *Nidrā*, meaning “the sleeping one”, is also one of the epithets of Śrī, and is therefore “interchangeable” with her. See *Lakṣmī Tantra* 8.31-36, in Gupta 1972: 47.
- 81 Compare with Kulacēkara Ālvār, PmāḷTM 1.1, in which Śrīraṅgarāja is described as having “feet massaged by the Kāverī”.
- 82 The main sanctum of the Śrīraṅgam Temple rests on a raised rectangular platform (Hari Rao 1967:16), which is apparently what Bhaṭṭar refers to in this verse. Since the image of a cloud resting on a mountain-top is a common one in Sanskrit poetry, I have translated *adrau* as “on a mountain”. Properly speaking, however, the temple is not situated on a mountain.
- 85 YMD 5.1-5 describes the eternal realm (*nityavibhūti*) as composed of “pure *sattva*” (*śuddhasattva*), a type of non-material substance that is different from the matter affected by the three *guṇas*. All of the bodies of the Lord, including His iconic incarnations, are made up of this “non-material substance” (v. 5). Note, however, that in YMD it is said to be “non-conscious” (*acetana*) and “self-luminous” (*svayam-prakāśa*) (v. 2). By way of contrast, Bhaṭṭar would appear to categorize the ornaments of the Lord as conscious: they are said to experience horripilation “on account of their being in the form of *cit*” (*cit mayatvāt*). I would hesitate to interpret this passage as a philosophical statement; rather, it appears to contain purely poetic imagery.
- 86 The description of Śrīraṅgarāja in this verse is similar to many contained in the DP. Compare with a few examples given below:
 Toṇṭaraṭippoti, TMālai, v. 2, depicts Śrīraṅgarāja as having “a body like a huge green mountain” (*paccaimā malaipōl mēṇi*); Nammālvār, TVM 2.6.4 addresses Him directly thus: “O my Emerald Mountain (*eṇ marakata malaiye*); PĀTM 3.2.3 describes Him as having “a body like gold and emerald” (*poṇmaṇimēṇi*).
- 87 For a discussion of the supremacy/lordliness of God as defined by His eternal association with (or embrace of) Śrī, see Nayar 1992: 225-32.

- 88 The two possible etymologies of the epithet Puṣpahāsa are: (1) *puspam iva hasaḥ yasya saḥ puṣpahāsaḥ*, a Bahuvrihi compound meaning “One who smiles like a flower”; and (2) *puṣpasya hasyaḥ iva saḥ puṣpahāsaḥ* or “He who is like the bloom of a flower”. Bhaṭṭar prefers the second etymology according to BhGD, No. 952. He writes: “In the case of those who have the ability to enjoy Him, He manifests His enjoyable nature gently, just like a flower that blooms in the evening. Therefore, He is [named] Puṣpahāsaḥ.” The latter etymology is reflected in this verse.
- 90 Since there is no preposition used with the word “good fortune” (*subhāgatam*), grammatically it may mean either “[our] good fortune” or “[His] auspiciousness”.
- 91 Compare the imagery of this verse with Nammālvār, TVM 3.1.1: “Has the splendour of Your face bloomed as the brightness of Your crown”?
- 93 “May [His face] roam about in me for enjoyment (*viharatu mayi*) is based on Tiruppāṇ Ālvār, Aāp, v. 4: “[His] waist-cord roams about in my soul/inner being.”
- 94 Compare with PĀTM 1.9.2: “Your curls of hair (*paṅkikāḥ*) swarm [near] Your coral-like mouth just like a bee (*vaṇṭepol*) drinking honey from a red-lotus flower.”
- 95 Ambrosia is popularly believed to flow from the moon.
- 97 “the god of love” (Smara), more commonly known as Manmatha. For similar imagery, see Antal, NTM 14.6: “The beautiful curve of the eyebrows, like the bow (*carriḱa*) which is in His hand...” and Nammālvār, TVM 7.7.4, in which the Lord’s eyebrows are compared to the sugarcane bow of Manmatha.
- 99 “white [streaked] with light red” (*ātāmr-dhavale*). Compare with Tiruppāṇ Ālvār, Aāp, v. 8: “those big eyes with light red streaks”.
- 102 “moss-like plants” (*śaivalām*). The attractiveness of this type of plant rests in the fact that it keeps the water clean and pure.
- 105 In Sanskrit poetics, kings are portrayed as bearing the burden of the universe by their arms. In the case of Śrīraṅgarāja, his shoulders are the support of all things sentient (*cit*) and insentient (*acit*).

- 106 The main icon in Śrīvaiṣṇava temples usually faces East; however, in Śrīraṅgam the Lord lies facing South. It is believed that He chose to lie facing South toward Laṅka in order to bless Vibhīṣaṇa, Rāvaṇa's brother.
- The Ālvārs wrote on the same theme. See, for example, PĀTM 4.9.2: "They will serve no other but our Araṅkaṇ, of bud-like eyes, which strained toward well-walled Laṅka, for the sake of wealthy Vibhīṣaṇa" (translation by Ate).
- 107 "Platform" (*vedi*) refers to the raised platform found in the courtyard of most Tamilian houses.
- 108 In ancient Tamil poetry, women measured the worth of men according to the marks they had obtained in war. Here we have a description of Śrīraṅgarāja's hands being rough with the bowstring of battle.
- 113 A thread with the five weapons of Viṣṇu (as ornaments) and the nails of a turtle and a tigress is worn in Tamil Nadu even today by small children as an amulet to ward off evil. PĀTM 1.7.2 describes the child Kṛṣṇa wearing the thread with a turtle shaped ornament.
- 115 Three lines on the stomach are regarded as a beautiful feature of the body.
- The three kinds of *cit* are the eternally free souls (*nitya-sūri*), the liberated souls (*mukta*), and those who desire liberation (*mumukṣu*). The three kinds of *acit* are that which is mixed with *sattva* (*miśra-sattva*), that which is devoid of *sattva*, and pure *sattva* (*śuddha-sattva*) (Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar 1969).
- 116 Compare with Nammālvār, PTAnt, v. 72: "Some say that three gods are equal (*mutalām*, lit. supreme), some that only one of the three is supreme....Isn't the lotus flower [from which all creation came] inside You?" (translation by Prof. K.K.A. Venkatachari).
- 120 "Golden Land" (*marma-sthala*). According to Purāṇic cosmology, there is a golden land beyond the seven oceans: "...the seven island continents are encompassed successively by the seven oceans, and each ocean and continent is respectively twice the extent of that which precedes it.... Beyond the sea of fresh water is a region of twice its extent, where

the land is of gold and where no living beings reside” (VP 2.4.88-97, translation by H.H. Wilson).

The word translated “dusk” (*sandhya*) refers to the time of the conjunction of day and night, and hence may mean either dawn or dusk.

- 121 Compare the imagery in this and the following stanza with that of VRS, vs. 57-58. Bhaṭṭar has based these two ślokaś on his father’s composition.
- 124 “His foot...is a witness to the happiness of Lakṣmī’s hands” refers to the joy that Lakṣmī experienced while massaging her Lord’s feet to remove the pain caused by His wandering in many places in His incarnational forms.

Following the Ālvārs, Śrīvaiṣṇavas regard Kṛṣṇa’s acting the role of a messenger to the Pāṇḍavas as an expression of condescension toward His devotees. See, for example, Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, PmālTM 2.2.3, in which Rāma is said to have conveyed his messages through a monkey, and then afterwards, in His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa, He Himself became a messenger for the Pāṇḍavas.

- 128 Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar’s commentary (1969) notes that at the completion of the sacrifice (*yajña*), the bath called *avabṛta-snāna* is required. And now that this stotra is finished, we bathe in Śrīraṅgarāja’s feet in that same manner.
- 127 Rāma and Sītā are believed to have worshipped Śrīraṅgarāja on their return to Ayodhyā from Laṅka. For that reason, He is especially dear to them, and hence they are said to worship him always.

Śrīraṅgarāja Stava: The Latter 100 Stanzas

1

The compassionate Lord gives the Veda
as a lamp to dispel the darkness
and to distinguish good from evil.

Wise people behold and enjoy [the Lord]
by means of that lamp
while some capricious [people]
become moths [burnt in its flame].

2

The Smṛtis of the Jainas and their ilk
which deny the authority of the Veda
and those which accept the authority of the Veda
but interpret it wrongly
darken the path of approach to You,
O Treasure of [Śrī]raṅgam!

Manu remembered that!

3

O Possessor of [Śrī]raṅgam!
Learned people reject the path of those
who deny the validity of Vedic knowledge
[which is obtained] by direct perception
by robbing [clear-sighted ones]

of what is right before their eyes,
and of those through their own capacity
for fallacious reasoning
arrive at contradictory meanings for Śruti
which is by nature faultless
because [their scriptures] are defective
on account of their having an author.

4

Because [the body] has limbs
it is perceived as distinct
by the external sense organs,
whereas the indivisible soul
transcends the sense organs and
shines as the subject of perception.

Because of the close connection of body and soul
people do not discriminate
between them.

Your Śāstra focuses on [the soul]
which is fit to go to the other world
O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!

5

O Lover of [Śrī]raṅgam!
Understanding of the meaning of Śruti
is also [obtained by means of] direct perception;
its meaning regarding *dharma* and *adharma*
the phenomenal universe
the transcendental realm
and the Lord
is not contradicted by direct perception
and is faultless!

O Lover of [Śrī]raṅgam!
Just like direct perception,

that Śruti [produces] valid knowledge,
even for the Cārvāka school.

[A Cārvāka] who has a mind awakened by yoga
may directly perceive its meaning.
Isn't it so?

6

The contemptible quack Buddha,
denying the existence of all things
without any reason
according to the four categories
is, is not, both is and is not, neither is nor is not
so that the world no status at all,
is fit to be cut to pieces
like a thief!

7

If [the non-existence of all things] is accepted
still this denial [of existence itself]
cannot be established,
for [if you maintain that all things are non-existent]
then who is it who makes the refutation?

O Bestower of Boons!
If the existence of one thing is denied
then the existence of something else
will be established
as when a pot is broken
the pieces remain.

Even according to this philosophy
[the non-existence of everything
must include] the non-existence of valid knowledge.

[Therefore, there is nothing to deny.]
Let Śruti conquer!

8

The Yogācāra denies [the existence of] the world
the Sautrāntika says that the world
is an object of inference
on account of the plurality of minds
and the Vaibhāṣika declares
that the perception of that [world]
is momentary.

All three say that
knowledge alone is the “soul”
and it too perishes from moment to moment.

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!
Those three!
We strike them down!

9

[The Buddhist statement that]
“The world is momentary
and the soul is nothing but
the knowledge of momentariness”
is incorrect
[because] if there is no knower
other than knowledge
the things that ought to be known
as well as the knower
perish in the twinkling of an eye,
and this world is deprived of
memory and recognition,
O Raṅgacandra!

10

The difference between the soul and knowledge
is made obvious in a statement such as
“I understand this”.

If [as the Advaitins claim,
the soul and knowledge] are one,
then the things apart from these two
are also a part of that oneness.

If those things are unreal,
then according to that argument
all things [including knowledge and the soul
are equally] unreal!

If knowledge of everything is unreal
then that [knowledge about unreality]
will itself be false!

[If they claim a ridiculous view like that]
then our philosophical school
should have a long life!

11

Foolish people have taught that
Brahman -- Who is knowledge alone --
becomes confused by ignorance
even though self-luminous.

When the individual soul has attained mastery
over the knowledge of the non-duality
of this [Brahman],
illusion is removed
and whatever is perceptible
is then [known to be] false.

Let Rāma's weapon destroy those who are
analyzing Brahman as if He were a person
belonging to this degenerate and despicable
Kali Yuga!

12

O Best among the dwellers in [Śrī]raṅgam!
Having accepted the jugglery
of the seven explanations
[beginning with] “may be, is and is not”,
Jaina philosophy describes
the whole wealth of Your world
as indeterminate in nature.

In the same way,
another [philosophy] has said that
this world is
both different and non-different [from You].

O Moon of Śrīraṅgam!
Let [the followers of] these two [philosophies]
who are knowers of a new Brahman
[of their own creation]
talk among themselves about this great secret
in phrases like:
“My mother is barren”.

13

Begging from Śruti the well-established idea
that You are the Cause of the world,
Kaṇacara and Caraṇākṣa
according to fallacious reasoning
transformed [that idea by declaring]
atoms [as the material cause of the world],
and proclaim that Your creation
beginning with ether
is independent of You.

14

O Splendorous One at [Śrī]raṅgam!
When the Veda is ascertained as authoritative
on account of its having no author

other [scriptures] are regarded as authoritative
on account of their being rooted in that [Veda].

Therefore [while] Sāṃkhya,
along with Yoga and the Paśupata school
[may be] authoritative in some matters,
Pāñcarātra is completely authoritative
because it is derived from the “Fifth Veda”.

.

15

The Sāṃkhyas placed You
in the category of a *puruṣa*
and do not accept You as Lord
because they misinterpret
the statements pertaining to Īśvara.

In a different way,
a follower of Yoga philosophy
declared that the quality of lordship
is like a reflection,
didn't he?

In still another manner,
the Śaivas
out of an excessively passionate
attachment [to Śiva]
think that lordship resides in a beggar,
O King [of the Universe] at [Śrī]raṅgam!

Because of Your great affection [for the devotees],
how richly abundant
You have revealed [Yourself to be]
with [Your forms] beginning with
para, *vibhava*, and *vyūha*.

16

The philosophical schools
which deny the validity of the Vedas
I regard as [equal to] a blade of grass
even though established by You
in a deceptive manner.

[If that is so], O Lord,
then what will I think of
the path of those with erroneous ideas
who are clad in the armour of the Vedas?

17

O Resident of [Śrī]raṅgam!
During the cosmic dissolutions
You kept the authorless Veda in Your mind,
then recollected it at the times of creation
and provided the appropriate name and form
[for each created entity].

Having taught [the Veda] to [special] people
beginning with Brahmā
who was awakened from his sleep,
and decreeing the welfare [of all],
You bestow [upon us] the authorless Veda
an authoritative means to valid knowledge.

18

Śikṣā teaches the proper order of syllables.

Correct understanding of the meaning of words
is taught by *vyākriyā* and *nirvacī*.

Chandas gives clarity about metres,
and *jyotiṣa* teaches us proper ritual timings.

Kalpa-[sūtra] has declared
the appropriate ordering of rituals,
and the clear meaning of Purāṇas and Smṛtis
may be discovered
by means of Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā.

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!
The Vedas
aided by these [eight disciplines]
seek You out.

19

Primarily, the Vedas are
the means to valid knowledge.

Smṛtis, along with Itihāsas, Purāṇas and Nyāya,
assist [in the understanding of the Vedas].

The first portion [of the Vedas]
exhaustively examines methods of Your worship,
while the lofty division
revealing Your activities, qualities, and glory
examines [the way] to reach Your feet.

O Blessed One!
You Yourself declared:
“I am known by all the Vedas”.

20

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!
Wrong-notioned philosophers say
that the power of the sacrifice is *apūrva*,
or that the performers [of a sacrifice]
obtain its fruits
by the grace of the ancestral fathers and the gods.

[But] masters of the Three [Vedas] say
that ritual sacrifices and meritorious works
are Your worship,
and their fruit proceeds from Your favour
because the prescription for their performance
is Your own commandment.

21

Prescriptions for the performance
of daily and occasional [rituals]
are Your command,
and you make allowance for the directive
concerning [rituals to be performed]
by those desirous of [boons such as] heaven.

Śruti [describes] the use of spells
for the destruction of enemies
as a means by which the wicked-minded
are brought under the control of the Śāstras.

Oh! [Śrī]raṅgam's All!
This Śruti reveals the desire of You
Who belong to everyone
and are Controller of everything
to protect [Your creatures]
and so it is Your eternal commandment.

22

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!
All the [Upaniṣadic] statements
such as "There is a treasure here"
which describe Your qualities, form, and activities
lead to the Final Goal.

These statements
[describing Your qualities]
have no special distinction

from injunctions regarding
Your worship and its fruits.

23

The body resides in its possessor;
modifications
which have exact form, intellect and speech
[are contained] in the instrument;
individual manifestation, *jāti*,
qualities and *karma*
are contained in the material substance.

Thus, on account of the fact that
[things] are located [in other things],
You think that this whole world is in You
and because of this
You are described as non-dual.

Then why are there confusing statements
concerning *māyā*, limiting adjuncts
and modification,
O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam?

24

The triumphant world-famous Vedic scholars
explicate [the Upaniṣadic statements]
which declare the non-difference
between You and the world
beginning with
“All this is indeed Brahman”
“All [things] have That as the Self”
“All this and I [are Vāsudeva]”
[and] “You are That”
[to mean that] the manifestation
of the entire universe
is dependent upon You and is Your body.

You are described as its Soul because
You preserve, create, make manifest,
swallow, control and pervade it!

25

Fools prattle that this world
has a Lord
has no Lord
has many lords
or again, has a Lord created by people
according to their own desire.

Some subsidiary sections [of scripture]
advanced the logic that
[Your creation's] variegated diversity
is the result of its lack of submission [to Your will
because it is bound by *karma*],
but Śruti itself has sung that
sentient beings (*cit*) and insentient matter (*acit*)
are eternally governed by You,
O Bestower of boons!

26

[The gods] beginning with Brahmā
are declared to be in the category of the “created”
and not in the category of [divine] incarnations
because they are slaves
to the movement of Your eyebrows.

You are not like those [other gods]
nor are they Your equal.

So with words pertaining to You
from Śruti and the sages, such as:
“The world is under a single umbrella” and
“[You are] the consort of Lakṣmī”

[we offer] satisfying water to those [dead men]
who argue by asking irrelevant questions.

27

These six qualities
knowledge, lordliness, creative power
immutability, untiring strength, and splendour
which yield a flood of
countless, unequalled, excellent auspicious qualities
untainted by defect, limiting adjunct
limitation, or number
make You invaluable, O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam,
like resplendence makes priceless
a jewel!

28

Whether restricted by
the function of Your own senses
or on Your own accord [without the senses]
O Emperor at [Śrī]raṅgam
You see the entire [universe]
perpetually and simultaneously
just as if [looking directly at]
the palm of Your hand.

[The Upaniṣads] have mentioned again and again
that Your perception
self-luminous, continuous
and without interruption or confusion
is knowledge.

29

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!
You hear with Your eyes
which function as Your ears.

The Great Lord has other sense organs
and uses [them] in whatever way He desires.

So seeing all [things] simultaneously
is suitable [for You, the Lord].

30

Those who say
that the world is caused by ignorance
are refuted by Your quality of omniscience.

Autonomous, independent
and with just a tiny portion of Your desire,
You manifested all [creatures]
according to their good and bad *karmas*
simultaneously, without obstruction
and without thinking it a great thing.

O Lord reclining in [Śrī]raṅgam,
This lordship differentiates You
the Material Cause of all
from the one described by the Sāṃkhya
as the only witness.

31

[Wise people] say that You are
the material cause [of the universe]
through Your own body [of *cit* and *acit*].

Your natural desire
transcending the limits of easy and difficult
plays perpetually everywhere.

O Raṅgarāja,
that desire is Your creative power
[to effect] limitless creation
and that [power] alone

clearly demonstrated by the navel of a spider
makes You superior to [the god of] the Śaivas.

32

The untiring strength
by which You bear the entire [universe]
as Your body
unaffected by fatigue
even though it is heavy work
is the foundation of Your own greatness
because it removes the necessity, O Lord,
for Your dependence upon any other cause.

33

You change all things
by Your presence alone
without [being] changed [Yourself] --
just like fragrance from a musk-deer's navel.

O Beloved Raṅga!
[Wise people] call that quality
immutability.

The cause which [itself undergoes] modification
is thereby differentiated [from You].

34

Your Splendour
the agent of action which removes any need for
dependence upon an instrumental cause
is the conqueror
of those bowed down [before You]
and the defeater of enemies,
O Wealth of [Śrī]raṅgam!

35

O Most Excellent One of [Śrī]raṅgam!
Investigating the group of Your qualities
including youth and bliss
Ānandavalli compared one with another
beginning with the human
clear up to the level of Viriñca,
but was not powerful enough
to reach its own goal.

Alas! Along the way
it stammers as if [struck] dumb
and perishes!

How can mind and speech [function at all]
in the limitation and enumeration of Your qualities?

36

Qualities beginning with tenderness, skill,
unsteadiness [born of excessive affection]
for those bowed down [before You],
forgiveness, compassion, victory, and beauty,
described in the *Āraṇyakas* and preserved [there]
like a [secret] treasure [reserved for the few],
are kept like a pile of precious gems
in the jewelry shop of [Śrī]raṅgam
suitable for the commercial traffic
of the [whole] world,
O Bestower of Boons!

37

Multitudes of Your true auspicious qualities
are celebrated because of having approached You
Who are in the limitless, free and deep
transcendent state of tranquillity
just like those [devotees]

who care for themselves
[by taking shelter with You].

Hey! Bestower of boons!
Only You [can fully] enjoy Yourself
Who are like a calm and waveless ocean
filled with abundant bliss
 having a depth, breadth and length
 equal to Your own
and subject to be known [only] by Yourself.

38

Gods such as Indra
 who think themselves
 equal to the Lord
sniff the [mere] fragrance of lordliness
and become bewildered,
while You
 ignoring the greatness
 of [Your own] limitlessness
remain unperturbed.

Let us not be surprised at this,
O [Lord] Who delights in [Śrī]raṅgam!

As to which is greater,
 Your inherent nature or
 the greatness [of Your essential form]
are not both
in harmony in You?

39

Because You are endowed with
the six auspicious qualities
You, Honourable One,
 Who as Para and Vāsudeva
 are an object of enjoyment

for the liberated souls [in *Vaikuṇṭha*]
distribute [Your qualities] in the following way
and lead all people to the truth:

as *Samkarśana*,
richly endowed with knowledge
and untiring strength,
You destroy [the worlds] and provide the *Śāstras*

as *Pradyumna*,
through lordliness and immutability,
You lead in the creation of the worlds
and establish the *dharma*

and as *Aniruddha*, O Lord,
bearing creative power and splendour,
You protect [the universe],
O Emperor at [Śrī]raṅgam!

40

O Master!
You take [the form of] the group of four *vyūhas* --
each one of which is itself four-fold.

Associated with their appropriate retinue
[Your creative cosmic emanations]
are fit subjects to be worshipped
according to the level of those meditating
in the stages of
waking
dreaming sleep
dreamless sleep
and the fourth and final state.

41

At the end of the cosmic dissolution
when *cit* is indistinguishable from *acit*

but at the same time passing through
 a succession of states
 with Your mind full of compassion
 and dependent only upon Your own will [to create]
 O Bestower of boons
 You caused the buds of matter
 in the form of intellect, egoism
 the five elements, and the series of senses
 to unite with the [five] sense organs and bodies.

42

Along with their companions the *Brahma Sūtras*,
 the Śrutis proclaim that in You
 Who create [the universe]
 only after taking into account
 the various deeds of the world's creatures
 low, high, and pitiable
 there is no chance of partiality
 or lack of compassion,
 O Owner [of the Universe] at [Śrī]raṅgam!

43

O [Śrī]raṅgam's All!
 Like the craftsman's consideration
 for the collection of instruments at his own disposal
 or an enjoyer's regard
 for his own body which is under his control
 or a reigning king's consideration
 for the deeds [of his subjects
 some of] whom are obedient
 and [some of] whom are transgressors
 or also the glance of a donor
 upon one who desires many things

at the time of creation,
the Creator's regard for the [*kārmic*] status
of the ones to be created
should bring Him only autonomy.

44

O Bestower of boons!
Of Your own free will,
expanding the part of Your own body
called *cit* and *acit*
which slept during the time of cosmic dissolution,
You play in the presence of Śrī
like a peacock in front of a peahen
spreading and shaking
its multi-coloured feathered tail
as if it is inlaid in the sky.

45

Although You have as Your chief aim
the welfare [of all creatures],
leading those
who are on a path detrimental to their own good
are controlled by despair
and sunk in the torrent [of *saṁsāra*],
time and time again
You follow the rules of *varṇa* and *āśrama*
and experience affliction
[during Your incarnations here on earth]
just like a mother drinking medicine
when her baby is ill,
O Raṅgarāja!

46

O Welfare of all!
O Splendorous One at [Śrī]raṅgam!

If all Your activities are not done in vain hope
 beginning with the creation and preservation
 of this fool-filled world
 [only then] is the perpetual awakened state
 of You who never tire,
 which is forever like the continuous stream
 of regular seasons,
 appropriate.

47

Punishing cruel people with hell and the like,
 You protect [Your devotees] from distress
 just like a good-hearted friend
 who fetters the feet of a madman,
 O Leader of [Śrī]raṅgam!

According to the “Maxim
 of the Stick and the Sweets”,
 [what need is there to mention that]
 Your offer of enjoyment and liberation
 to good people
 [arises likewise]
 from Your quality of good-heartedness?

48

Time and time again
 You behold Your creatures
 incorrigible, though You gift them
 with the Śāstras
 and with Your glances of protection
 which sustain and control [the worlds].

Then You
 Imperishable Soul and Birthless God
 playfully descend here [to earth]
 in a state equal to gods, humans, and animals.

49

Had Indirā not appeared along with You
her form and actions appropriate
for each and every one of Your incarnations,
then Your sportive activity [here on earth]
would surely have become insipid
as well as condemned,
O Raṅgarāja!

50

O Blessed One!
Calm and steady persons understand well
that Your birth in human and other forms
is [an expression of] Your greatness,
but fools, not knowing this,
show disrespect toward Your birth and activity
destroyers of [the cycle of] births [and deaths].

51

If Your initial incarnation
in between Brahmā and Śiva
was to conceal Your supremacy
by making them seem to be Your equals,
then why, O Splendorous One of [Śrī]raṅgam,
do You take these [other incarnations]
which manifest Your supremacy here [on earth]
inducing people to the true path
and nurturing them with Your grace?

52

Please, O Possessor of [Śrī]raṅgam!
Incarnated as a horse,
You destroyed the obstacles Madhu and Kaiṭabha,
bestowed upon Brahmā divine vision
in the form of the Three [Vedas],

and gave life to the whole world
freely and spontaneously!

53

O Sustainer of [Śrī]raṅgam!
Enriched with the nectar of the sacrifice
that is knowledge,
coming forth in the form of a swan --
cool, pure and a devourer of darkness
just like the moon --
You favoured those afflicted [in *saṁsāra*]
with the bright light of the Vedas.

54

O Splendorous One of [Śrī]raṅgam!
Lying on a banyan leaf
looking like a sleeping baby ocean
You put Your lotus-foot into Your mouth.

[Why did You do such a thing as that?]

Was it in order to measure the worlds
[which You hold] in Your stomach?
or was it with a longing for it to be enjoyed
by the Vaiṣṇavas [dwelling there]?

55

You uprooted Mount Mandara
brought it [to the ocean] and tied it with the serpent.

Arms covered by swinging garlands,
You churned the ocean as if churning curds.

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!
You first acquired the moon
the *kaustubha* gem, nectar and so forth

and when You obtained Kamalā
Your entire effort became fruitful.

Isn't that true?

56

When the lord of the elephants [Gajendra]
shouted for help,
God, the Glory of [Śrī]raṅgam,
became mentally agitated,
withdrew His tender leaf-like feet
from their massage
by the goddesses' lotus-hands,
abruptly left the serpent [couch] Ananta and
opening wide His eyes
with their trembling eyelids,
pulled His chest away
from Lakṣmī's jar-like breasts
shining with saffron paste.

May [That One] appear before our eyes!

57

Homage to the speed of the Lord Who
when He heard the trumpeting
of the most excellent elephant [Gajendra]
threw His harem into confusion!

Ignoring the hands [of Viṣvaksena]
spread before Him,
[the Lord] refused his offer of jewelled sandals and,
neglecting to decorate His vehicle,
mounted onto the king of the birds [Garuḍa].

58

When You heard the trumpeting of Gajendra
 spread abroad,
 observing Garuḍa with Your mind
 which forever leads all the worlds
 and supposing him to be too slow,
 You insulted him by kicking Him with Your feet
 and got him to move by shouting “giddyap”.

Lifting him up
 You rose [into the sky].

O God!
 O Friend of [Śrī]raṅgam!
 When [like Gajendra]
 a person bows down [before You]
 Your condition [becomes that of a madman]
 who runs here and there
 not knowing where he is going!

59

O One reclining in [Śrī]raṅgam,
 You are my refuge.

[Upon hearing] the trumpeting of the elephant,
 [You felt troubled], saying “Woe is me!”

Wearing garlands, ornaments, and garments
 all in disarray
 You came [to Gajendra]
 dancing like a lotus pond
 blowing in a strong gale.

60

O Blessed One!
 Having the body of a fish,

You put the multitude
of moving beings and non-moving things
and Your own pleasurable words
of the Veda and its branches
into a boat along with Manu
and bore them without even a moment's fear
concerning the cosmic dissolution.

61

Having the wonderful form of a fish
radiant, long, very wide, beautiful
clear, cool, and flashing
just like the eyes of Śrī
and fond of playing in a puddle
and in the water of the ocean
swallowed and ejected through Your fins,
You darted about here and there.

62

O One Who delights in Śrī!
As the Tortoise Who supports all the worlds,
You explained the *dharma*.

Becoming Kūrma,
and bearing Mount [Mandara] on Your back
during the churning of the nectar,
You obtained glory
as the lovely emerald-seat
easily accessible to
the tender sprout-like feet of Lakṣmī
who was rising up out of the water.

63

Being in the form of the Primordial Boar,
throwing the foaming ocean
of the cosmic dissolution

onto the enemy of the gods [Hiraṇyakaśipu's] chest
 which was dug by Your tusk,
 and embellishing the breasts of the Earth goddess
 with saffron in the form of that demon's blood,
 You grunted at Brahmā who
 agitated by Your bushy broad-spreading bristles
 [began] praising [You].

You are my refuge,
 O Possessor of [Śrī]raṅgam!

64

O Lord in [Śrī]raṅgam!
 We worship the Lion Who has
 a bushy mane, huge teeth, and a united form
 according to the "Maxim of Milk and Sugar".

People who have seen a man or a lion separately
 shrink back on seeing the wonder of
 the natural union human and lion!

65

His shoulders made moist by the masses of blood
 [flowing] from the enemy
 torn by His claws
 [blood] which resembles splendid sweet spittle
 from the mouth of Lakṣmī
 who was prevailing upon Him
 to pacify the forest fire in his eyes
 arising out of hatred for the enemy,
 the Man-Lion obstructs sin here [in Śrīraṅgam].

66

Eagerly bearing the qualities of human and lion
 in the same suitable, although contradictory, place
 out of an excess of anger,

You caused the disappearance
of Your devotee's enemy
by the tips of Your claws.

Having a gigantic form
a two-fold extension
of the qualities of the All-pervading One
You have fostered the [whole] world.

67

As Vāmana You became a beggar
in order to remove the wastefulness arising from
the demon [Mahābali's] generosity
and Indra's petition.

The group of three worlds
equivalent to [three] atoms
became like grains of sand
sticking to Your lotus-feet
as You traversed [the worlds];
the lotus [arising from Brahmā's] navel was there,
desiring to create yet another group of worlds
to be measured [by Your steps].

O Lord Raṅga!
The Veda is a drum
which announces the victory
of Your activity [as Vāmana].

68

Having become the Bhṛgu clan's Rāma
adorned with an axe,
You destroyed the kings,
pleased the group of deceased ancestors
with their blood,
and lightened [the load of] the overburdened world.

O Faultless One!
 Although You seem ferocious
 to Your enemies
 You overlook my sins!

69

Having agreed [to become] human, O Lord,
 You descended [to earth]
 along with the Lotus Lady.

When she made a play of hiding herself
 in the garden,
 You constructed [a bridge] over the ocean,
 and removed all the limbs of the demon enemy
 who was puffed up with pride
 because of the boons given him
 by Brahmā and Śiva,
 making him into leftovers
 for a family of monkeys.

70

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!
 We will serve You, [Balarāma]
 the ploughholder and farmer
 of [the world's] welfare

Who counted his victory in gambling
 with the King of Kalinga's sprout-like teeth

Whose momentary separation [from Kṛṣṇa]
 caused the uproar created by Kālīya

and Whose activity as messenger
 made the cowherdesses
 forget the transgressions of Kṛṣṇa.

71

Devakī wanted You,
[the Supreme] Brahman
Who resembles a slow-moving rain filled cloud
the wearer of the golden garment
the Lotus-eyed One [carrying] five weapons,
to be her baby.

O Beloved One of [Śrī]raṅgam,
Who else longs for
such a child?

72

In the intoxication
[caused] by the melodious sound
of Your flute

mountains and fire became
cool liquid

sages became
fools

senseless trees along with the cowherders became
enlightened

huge poisonous snakes became
nectar

and cows and tigers became
brothers.

Other things were also changed
and You Yourself
O Lord
became
just another one among them.

73

Having the form of Kalki,
You will give relief to the world
and will kill the polluted rogues
of Kali [Yuga].

O Resident of [Śrī]raṅgam!
Annihilate all the cruel ones right away saying,
“Cut, [them to pieces],
Cut [them to pieces]”!

74

Let cease the counting of Your births
overflowing with auspicious qualities
[as well as] the numbering
of the groups of Your qualities
O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!

You delight at being worshipped in this world
in temples, homes and hermitages,
bearing all things
and in a condition
of complete dependence upon the temple priests.

Tender-hearted persons are stunned
at this character [of Yours].

75

Having thought thus:
“The Auspicious Heaven
is beyond the level of speech and mind;
all incarnations [are limited]
to some [particular] time;
but this state [of incarnation in an icon]
is for the welfare of the entire people”
and blinded [to our faults] by Your compassion,

You soften the hearts [of Your devotees]
with glances welcoming to the afflicted.

You sleep in the [Śrī]raṅgam Abode
in the awakened state
made unsteady by Your consideration
to protect the [whole] world.

76

Knowing the One sleeping on Ananta
with his own mind broadened
by his experience as creator in many eons,
Brahmā who bathes in the Ganges
flowing from the water-pot used for *pūjā*
and who praises You on his own
with the help of his wife Bhārati,
worshipped You with His faces, eyes,
and hands-folded-in-supplication
like lotuses bent down [before You].

77

O All-pervasive One!
You Whose lotus feet
are worshipped by the waving of lamps
and luminous with lustre
from the gem-studded *makaras*
on the groups of crowns
belonging to the Kings of the Manu Dynasty
prostrating [before You]
are suitably adored in the Abode of [Śrī]raṅgam
in Your form as Maithili's Husband.

78

Although the members of the Manu Dynasty
and the auspicious Brahmā [are present],

You [remain here]
solely because of the esteemed Vibhīṣaṇa.

O Lord!
[Reclining] in the middle of the river,
You gladden this people
poor in auspicious qualities!

79

May I worship that Lord at Śrīraṅgam Who
because of the great lustre
which reaches from His crown
clear down to His toenails
[Gāyatrī Mantra] describes as
the well-known and worshippingable
Supreme Splendour of the Sun,
and the Śrutis describe as
the Red-lotus-eyed [Lord]
and the Golden One.

80

You are the Soul of [all] moving beings
and non-moving objects,
the Eye of the sun, Varuṇa, and Agni.

For hundreds of autumns
[here] in [Śrī]raṅgam
may we see You
Who have an eternal and inherent
close association with Lakṣmī.

81

I will not leave the Master to Whom I belong
Who sleeps in [Śrī]raṅgam's lofty sanctuary .

With servitude [to Him]
as my essential nature,
I worship Him with sacrificial oblations
consisting of knowledge.

82

I take refuge with You, the Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam,
the life of all Your subjects
the ambrosia of the gods.

An individual soul who exists for That One,
I cleave to You Who are
the glorious Supreme Brahman!

83

O Master of [Śrī]raṅgam!
According to the verses of the *Gītā*, O God,
without any discrimination
You consider as equally generous
those who have Your refuge as their [only] help
[whether they be]
one desirous of regaining lost wealth
one wishing to acquire new wealth
one who [wants the experience of] his own Self
one who is desirous of knowledge
one who wishes his own servitude [to You]
[or] a wise one.

84

Without attachment and without egoism,
devoid of all worldly desire
and with minds [concentrated on]
the Supreme Soul,
some perform
the daily, occasional and optional commands

O Moon of Raṅgam
without really acting.

85

Considering the individual soul
as the twenty-fifth [*tattva*]
and having distinguished it
from the group of shining *tattvas*,
those who concentrate their own minds
on the bearer of truth [within themselves]
reach themselves.

Those who unite themselves to You
obtain You,
O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!

86

With their attachments destroyed
and with minds made tremulous from the intensity
of their inherent slavery [to You],
some offer You praise, meditation, and salutations,
and obtain the greatest goal --
they exist in You!

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam?
How can this be?
[For] You exist in them!

87

Upaniṣadic statements say
that the Possessor of Śrī
declared *cit* and *acit* as His own [possessions]
by [His activities] beginning with
the creation, maintenance, and direction
[of the worlds]
and takes them to Himself.

[We see] here that the state of being
the means and the goal
is Your true nature,
not just [a reflection of] two of Your qualities.

So without any pretext
I chose You as my refuge,
O One reclining in [Śrī]raṅgam!

88

A creature is put in the state
of transitory existence or Final Liberation
by You alone
in the same way that
a cowry is placed in the category of
a penny or a gold piece
by a clever [king].

Protect me --You and only You --
O Treasure-house of [Śrī]raṅgam!

89

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!
Without the wealth of knowledge,
works, or devotion,
devoid of desire, eligibility, ability and repentance,
ignorant and full of sins
with my mind foolishly confused
by worldly affairs,
I say: "Be my refuge".

90

While You, the Supreme Goal of life,
Who have me as Your chief object of concern,
are [right] here [before us]

O Raṅgacandra
I deceive the entire people.

Trusting in unreal things
which cause the soul to perish
and arrogant at being a spiritual guide,
I [act] like a wise man
who has the same form as You!

91

Transgressing Your commandments
and prohibitions,
I continuously injure You and Your devotees
in word, thought, and deed.

I delight in
consciously or unconsciously committed offences
unbearable to You.

O One devoted to [Śrī]raṅgam,
out of Your forbearance
please don't consider me
as belonging to another,
[rather, look upon me as Yours alone].

92

When there exists here [in Śrīraṅgam]
a dense shade [created by]
the boon-bestowing tree of Your shoulders,
still I take shelter in
the shadow of sensual enjoyments
resembling the expanded hood
of an angry snake,
O Life of [Śrī]raṅgam.

93

Alas! Friend of [Śrī]raṅgam!
The strength of insects [like myself]
is greater than all Your creative power!

Crossing beyond even Your grace,
this insect perishes -- dying while still living --
[just like a silkworm
which makes its nest and then dies there]
as described in the "Maxim
of the Silkworm in its Cocoon".

94

O Lord at Śrīraṅgam!
Who has seen the other shore
of [the ocean of] my sins?
Who has seen the other shore
of [the sea of] Your good qualities?

For just like a do-nothing
who remains thirsty in a flood
I am not adept in satisfying my thirst
[by drinking in] Your auspicious qualities
showering down [upon me]!

95

Being born in human and other forms,
because of Your grace
You experienced the matured fruits
of the actions appropriate [to those births],
O One reclining in Śrīraṅgam.

If that is so, then why should we be troubled
[by having to bear] again and again
happiness, distress and all the rest ?

96

Your patience will approach even a guilty one
 who has true repentance
 but how can it exist in an arrogant sinner like me?

Even so

O Overlord [of the Universe] at [Śrī]raṅgam
 Your boundless patience may forgive
 even an unrepentant [man like me].

97

Known throughout the whole world always,
 let Your patience
 which contracted
 [when directed toward] great sinners
 like the crow [Jaṭāyu] and Śiśupāla
 because they had an iota of an auspicious quality
 roam about in me
 who am ignorant of even the thought of having
 a tiny bit of [a single] auspicious quality,
 O Bestower of boons!

98

Your compassion removes misfortune for others
 [but] the sorrow of *saṁsāra* is happiness to me,
 so I am beyond Your mercy.

Even though sorrow causes me to rejoice,
 take pity on me
 O One abounding in auspicious qualities!
 O [Lord] Who lives in the [Śrī]raṅgam Temple!

99

Encircled by the waves
 of the six kinds [of suffering]
 the womb, birth, old age, death, pain, and *karma*,

I have longed for You
Who are worthy of Śrī
just like a dog [who wants to eat the food]
offered to the gods in the Vedic sacrifice.

100

O Treasure-house of [Śrī]raṅgam!
Enjoyment of the prosperity
bestowed by You
is better for a dog like me
than the feigning of humility
[founded on] the imitation of my predecessors.

101

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!
Having forsaken You
Who have taken an vow for the welfare
of those who -- once only --
have surrendered to You, imploring
“I am Yours”,
I become egoistic due to the absence
of trust and discrimination.

102

I was made Your burden
by the people of the *dharma*.

I uttered the word
“refuge” (*śaraṇam*).

Regarding this as my witness,
make me Your burden right now,
O Bearer of the burden [of the Universe]
[Who dwells] in [Śrī]raṅgam!

103

Compassion consists in being unable to bear
 the sorrows of others;
 You are non-different from others,
 so You are not compassionate.

You do not even know the offences
 of those who bow down [before You],
 so You do not have patience,
 O Moon of Raṅgam.

O Lord, You regard Your wealth
 as [already] belonging to those who long for it,
 so You cannot be called generous.

104

Lift up this very dejected person
 with the loftiness of Your auspicious qualities,
 O Master [of the Universe] in [Śrī]raṅgam!

[For after all], the lordliness of the Lord
 [consists in] the complete satisfaction
 of His supplicants' desires!

105

You support those who delight in ritual actions
 knowledge
 devotion
 and detachment
 just like water bears fish.

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam!
 If You protect
 a very insignificant one like me,
 it would be [like] a shed
 in which cool water is kept
 [for travellers] in the deserts.

NOTES

- 1 “Veda” (*māṇam*, synonymous with *pramāṇa*, lit. “a means to valid knowledge”). In the context of this stanza, the reference is to *śabda*, or scripture.
 Śrīvaiṣṇavas frequently quote this stanza in order to demonstrate the importance of scripture as a *pramāṇa*.
 The imagery of the Veda as lamp is in found Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, PTM, 8.9.4 in which the phrase “...a lamp spread in the form of the Vedas” (*maṛaiyāy viritta viḷakkai*) occurs.
- 2 “Jainas” (*arhat*). *Arhat* may refer to “a Buddha who is still a candidate for Nirvāṇa; a Jaina; a superior divinity with the Jainas; the highest rank in the Buddhist hierarchy” (M-W, 93). In this stanza the term is used to refer generally to those who deny the authority of the Veda.
 “Manu remembered (or taught) that!” (*smṛtavān manustat*) is a humorous reference to *Manu Smṛti* wherein Manu expressed his view of the validity of Smṛtis: “Smṛtis which deny the authority of the Veda (*veda-bahyāḥ*, lit. “which are outside the Veda”) or which interpret it according to wrong ideas (*kudṛṣṭayāḥ*) all are considered to be in ignorance and useless” (*Manusmṛiti* 1961: 12.106).
 This stanza is the beginning of a section extending through v. 15 which consists of a refutation of the various philosophical schools and religions. By including stanzas of philosophical refutation in what is by genre a praise-poem directed to the Lord at Śrīraṅgam, Bhaṭṭar is following Tontaraṭipoti Ālvār, TMālai, vs. 7-8.
- 4 For purposes of clarity, the stanzas of philosophical refutation (vs. 4-15) have been loosely translated.
 The people mentioned in this stanza as not discriminating between body and soul are the Cārvākas, who do not accept the existence of the soul because it cannot be perceived:
 “...the Cārvāka admits the validity of only one *pramāṇa*, viz. perception, and rejects not only verbal testimony but also inference....The Cārvāka...does not believe in any spiritual values and is content with the worldly ones of sensual pleasure (*kāma*) and wealth (*artha*)....He repudiates the authority

of the Veda which, according to the orthodox, is the source of belief in such values, saying that different parts of it are irreconcilably at variance with one another, and that it is therefore impossible to make out what it really teaches” (Hiriyanna 1974: 57-59).

- 6 “contemptible quack Buddha” (*sugatapāśaḥ*). The suffix *pāśa* carries a wide variety of negative meanings. Sugata is one of Buddha’s many epithets.

“Is...neither is nor is not” is the “Mādhyamika definition of the ultimate reality...viz. that it neither ‘is’ nor ‘is not’, nor ‘both is and is not’, nor ‘neither is nor is not’. It excludes all conceivable predicates, including that of non-existence; and the ultimate has accordingly to be viewed as beyond all conception, and not as absolute nothing” (Hiriyanna 1974:82-3).

Bhaṭṭar refers to the Lord at Śrīraṅgam as Varada or “Bestower of boons” in his refutations of Buddhist philosophy (vs. 6-7), thus contrasting the world-denial of the Buddhists with the more positive attitude to the world that exists in Vaiṣṇavism.

Some modern scholars would disagree with Bhaṭṭar’s interpretation of Buddhist (and especially Mādhyamika) thought found in this and several other stanzas. “...the majority of modern scholars who have studied this school of thought [i.e. Mādhyamika] are of the opinion that ‘the void’ (*śūnya*) here means only that it is nothing, as it were, since it is altogether incomprehensible” (Hiriyanna 1974:82-3).

In their violent tone, this and several other of Bhaṭṭar’s stanzas resemble Toṇṭaraṭipoṭi Ālvār’s TMālai (see especially v. 8).

- 8 Bhaṭṭar refutes three schools of Buddhism in this stanza. Compare with Rāmānuja, who divides Buddhism into four schools: “[the Vaibhāṣikas] admit the external things which consist of the elements and the products of those elements, and which have all of them the nature of an aggregate constituted by infinitesimal atoms belonging to the elements, earth, water, fire and air, as also the internal things consisting of the unceasing flow of consciousness, love and hatred; [they hold] that these are all established by

perception and inference....The Sautrāntikas are of opinion that all the external things consisting of the earth etc. are capable of being inferred by means of the understanding.... Others [i.e. the Yogācāras] hold that the understanding without [any] external objects is alone the real entity, while all the external objects resemble the objects perceived in dreams. All these three schools also hold that the reality accepted by them is momentary in nature....There are others still [i.e. the Mādhyamikas] who uphold the nothingness of all things” (ŚrīBh II.2.3.17).

- 11 “Rāma’s weapon” (*rāmāstram*) refers to the arrow or missile of Rāma, which was so powerful and precise that it never returned until fulfilling its aim.
- 12 “The jugglery of the seven explanations” (*sapta-bhaṅgi-kusṛtim*). Jaina philosophy attempts to reveal the “relative character of our knowledge of reality that is made known through the *sapta-bhaṅgi* ; and it consists of seven steps since there are seven, and only seven, ways of combining the three predicates, taking them singly, in twos and all together. To state the first four steps of the scheme: (1) maybe, a thing is; (2) maybe, it is not; (3) maybe, it is and is not; (4) maybe, it is inexpressible...(5) maybe, a thing is and is inexpressible; (6) maybe, a thing is not and is inexpressible; (7) maybe, a thing is, is not and is inexpressible” (Hiriyanna 1974: 67-8).
- 13 Kaṇacara (or Kaṇāda) is the name of an important Vaiśeṣika philosopher; Caraṇākṣa is a philosopher of the Nyāya School.
“It is in elaborating this [Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika] cosmological scheme that the system postulates the existence of God as the all-knowing Being, who disposes the atoms in the manner required for the emergence of the world as we know it. He does not create the atoms, because they are eternal like him. In other words, he is only an efficient cause possessing the will and intelligence required for bringing about the desired result [and not the material cause of the universe]” (Hiriyanna 1974: 89-90).
- 14 “Fifth Veda”, that is, the Mahābhārata.

In recognizing the partial validity of the Sāṃkhya, Yoga, and Paśupata schools, Bhaṭṭar follows Rāmaṇuja: “It is difficult to concede authority in respect of reality as it is, to systems of individual origin, on account of their arguments about principles conflicting with one another and on account of their stand against the reality which is to be known only from the Vedas, which are free from the slightest trace of all imperfections like carelessness, etc. on account of their superhuman origin (*apauruṣeyatvena*); Nārāyaṇa, who is the Supreme Brahman, is to be known from the Veda; hence the reality of every principle taught in the various systems, such as the pradhāna, the puruṣa and Paśupati, is based on their having for their self Nārāyaṇa, who is the Supreme Brahman to be known from the Vedas...It is not that everything in these systems is to be repudiated, as is the case with the philosophies expounded by Jina and Buddha” (ŚrīBh II.2.8.42).

- 15 “soul” (*puruṣa*). The Sāṃkhyas teach that there are two eternal entities: matter (*prakṛti*) and souls (*puruṣa*). “...God is here one of the Puruṣas so that, though eternal and omnipresent, he is not all comprehensive. There are other Puruṣas as well as Prakṛti to limit his being...he is not responsible, in the ordinary sense of the term, for the creation of the world which...is the spontaneous work of Prakṛti. All that he is stated to do is to prompt, in a way, the evolution of Prakṛti or to bring about its connection with Puruṣa needed for the evolution” (Hiriyanna 1974:125).

Bhaṭṭar calls the quality of lordship as understood by [Patañjali's] Yoga philosophy a “reflection” (*prati-phalanam*). Although the school accepts the existence of God, it believes His existence can be known only by inference: “The argument [for the existence of God] is that the gradation of knowledge, power, and such other excellences which we notice in men necessarily suggests a Being who possesses those excellences in a superlative form” (Hiriyanna 1974:125).

“Beggar” (*bhīkṣu*) refers to Śiva. When Śiva cut off the head of Brahmā, his skull stuck to Śiva's hand, and re-

- mained there until filled with alms. Therefore, Bhaṭṭar calls Śiva a “beggar”, an image of Śiva popular with the Ālvārs.
- 16 “Even though established by You in a deceptive manner” (*mohana-varṣmanā* or “[established] by Your infatuating greatness or handsome form”. The first reading is based on the commonly held belief that even the heterodox philosophies are the creation of Lord Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. It is for this reason that nearly every Śrīvaiṣṇava temple contains a statue of Kapila, one of the forms taken by Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, Who is said to have created various erroneous philosophies in order to reveal, by comparison, the greatness of Viśiṣṭādvaita.
- 17 Following ŚvetUp, v. 18, Bhaṭṭar says that Nārāyaṇa teaches the Veda to Brahmā, and then to the rest of the world through him.
- 18 Bhaṭṭar mentions eight aids to the study of the Vedas. The last two, Nyāya (logic) and Mīmāṃsā (a particular school of Vedic interpretation) are not normally listed with the standard six. The remaining six are called the *vedāṅgas* (“limbs or branches of the Vedas”).
- 19 “The first portion [of the Vedas]” (*pūrva-bhāgaḥ*) refers to what is usually called *karma-kāṇḍa* or *pūrva-mīmāṃsā*. It includes the ritualistic portions of the Vedas which, according to Rāmānuja, “give small and transitory results” (ŚrīBh I.1.1.1). The “lofty division” (*ūrdhvaḥ bhāgaḥ*), usually termed *brahma-kāṇḍa* or *brahma-mīmāṃsā*, refers to the Upaniṣads, which give knowledge of Brahman and final release (ŚrīBh I.1.1.1).
- This stanza is frequently quoted by Śrīvaiṣṇavas. Note that Bhaṭṭar follows Rāmānuja in regarding the entire Veda as a single unit (ŚrīBh I.1.1.1).
- “I am known/made known by all Vedas” (*vedyāḥ vedaiḥ sarvairaham*) is based on Kṛṣṇa’s statement in BhG 15.15: “I alone am known by all the Vedas” (*vedaiśca sarvaiḥ aham eva vedyāḥ*).
- 20 “ritual sacrifices” (*iṣṭa*); “meritorious works” (*pūrta*).
 “*Apūrva*” refers to “the remote or unforeseen results of ritual actions (such as heaven). Two schools of Mīmāṃsākas are indirectly referred to in this stanza: the Prabhākara

School of Mīmāṃsā teaches that the sacrifices create power (*apūrva*), and a lot of powers taken together give heaven, etc. The Bhaṭṭa School of New Mīmāṃsā teaches that these sacrifices are worship offered to ancestors and the gods, and their fruits come from their grace.

- 24 “All This, indeed, is Brahman” (*sarvaṁkhalu[idam brahma]*) is from ChUp 3.14.1; “All [things] have That as the Self” (*aitadātmyam [idam sarvam]*) is from ChUp 6.16.3; “All this and I [are Vāsudeva]” (*sarvaṁ idam aham [ca vāsudevah]*); “You are That” (*tattvamasī*) is from ChUp 6.8.7 and 6.16.3.

The phrase “has a Lord” (*sarājakam*) is a reference to the view of Nyāya philosophers, who accept the existence of God on the basis of inference. The phrase “has no Lord” (*arājakam*) refers to the Mīmāṃsakas, who deny the existence of God. The phrase “has many lords” (*aneka-rājam*) refers to those people who believe in the equality of the three gods Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva (Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar 1974).

- 26 The offering of “satisfying water” (*jalamucitam*) to the dead refers to the ritual offering called *tarpaṇa*, which involves “the refreshing (especially of gods and deceased persons) [*ṛṣi-pitr*] by presenting to them libations of water” (M-W, 440).

This stanza describes the Lord as priceless because of His qualities. A more usual Śrīvaiṣṇava interpretation is that the qualities of the Lord get their value from their association with Him. See, for example, ŚVS, vs. 47-8, and SBS, v. 22.

- 29 The image of the Lord possessing an infinite number of senses, symbolic of His omniscience, is taken from PuSū: “The Person who has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand legs....”

- 30 According to the commentary of Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar (1974), if the term “caused by ignorance” (*ajñamūlam*) is taken as referring to insentient objects (*acit*), the stanza is a refutation of Sāṃkhya philosophy; if interpreted as referring to (*māyā*), it is a refutation of Advaita.

- 31 The navel of a spider, from which the web emerges, is an image commonly employed analogically to the creative power of Brahman. MUp 1.1.7: “Just as the spider casts out and draws in [its web], as on earth the annual herbs are produced, as from a living person the hairs of the head and body spring forth, in that same manner, the universe is generated from the indestructible [Brahman]”.
- Śaivas do not accept the Lord as the material cause of the universe.
- 33 The idea expressed here is that while the fragrance of musk has an effect on the persons who smell it, the quality of the fragrance itself is not changed in being smelled.
- 34 In this stanza, Bhaṭṭar combines two of Rāmānuja’s definitions related to the doctrine of causality. See Carman 1981:163.
- 36 The *Āraṇyakas* are difficult texts to comprehend. The particular reference in this stanza is most probably to the Bṛhad Up 2.1, a passage that can be easily used by Advaitins to substantiate their understanding of Brahman as qualityless.
- 38 For *svarūpa* and *svabhāva* in the theology of Rāmānuja, see Carman 1981: 88-97. Sudarśana Sūri, who commented upon Rāmānuja’s GT, identifies *svarūpa* (essential form) with *īśitṛtva* (lordliness/ supremacy/sovereignty) and *svabhāva* (essential nature) with *saualabhya* (accessibility) (Carman 1981:91). In the commentary on this stanza by Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar, *vaipulī* (greatness) is glossed with *svarūpa*.
- 40 The four stages of meditation are mentioned in this stanza -- “the awaking state” (*jāgrat*); “dreaming sleep” (*svapna*); “dreamless sleep” (*atyalasa*); “the fourth and final state” (*turiya*). Bhaṭṭar elaborates upon the four stages in his BhGD: “In the first group [of meditators], the external senses function; in the second group they do not function, only the mind is active; in the third group even the mind does not function, there is only breathing; in the fourth group even the breath is suspended. In the Paramapada there is a pillar called *viskha-sthambha*, composed of non-material matter (*śuddha-sattva*). There are four parts in the pillar from the base upwards and on the four sides of each part are

the four *vyūha*-forms -- Vāsudeva, Saṁkarśana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The four parts, with one of the four *vyūhas* in each, correspond to the four stages of development that may be found in the worshipper who meditates on them” (Bhaṭṭar, BhGD, No.140, fn).

- 41 “According to Sāṁkhya philosophy, the first thing to emerge from Prakṛti is ‘intellect’ (*mahat*), which in turn gives rise to the principle of individuality or “egoism” (*ahamkāra*).... From egoism, two groups of principles proceed: One of them consists of the further aids to conscious life, that is, *manas*, the five sense organs, and the five motor organs, that is, speech, handling, walking, evacuation (*payu*) and reproduction. The other group of principles forms the basis of the objective world, that is, the five elements” (Hiriyanna 1974:110).
- 45 The image here is of a mother who drinks medicine herself instead of giving it directly to her sick baby. The baby receives the benefit of the medicine through the drinking of its mother’s milk.
- 47 “The Maxim of the Stick and the Sweets” (*daṇḍa-apupika-nyāya*) teaches that, when a stick (used to drive away the rats) and sweets have been kept together, if the stick has been eaten by rats, then we need not speak about the sweets for we can be sure that they were eaten too. Bhaṭṭar refers to this maxim in another context in BhGD, No. 45.
- 49 Compare Bhaṭṭar’s view of the inseparability of Viṣṇu and Śrī with VP 1.9.140-43.
- 50 “Fools...show disrespect” (*avajānanti mūḍhāḥ*) is based on BhG 9.11: “Fools show disrespect for me who have resorted to a human body” (*avajānanti mām mūḍhāḥ manuṣīm*).
- 53 “The...sacrifice that is knowledge” (*jñāna-yajña*) is based on BhG 9:15: “With the sacrifice that is knowledge (*jñāna-yajña*)...worship me”.
- The swan who brought the Vedas to the world has been praised by Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār in PTM 5.7.3, in which it is said that the Lord became a swan (*aṇṇam*), graciously revealed the Veda (*maṛai*), and destroyed the darkness.

- 54 “To measure the worlds [which reside] in Your stomach” is a reference to Viṣṇu’s swallowing of the world.
- 55 While the verbs in this stanza are in the imperative, they have been translated with a sense of the past tense according to Pāṇini 3.4.13. When a number of verbs are used in a single stanza, imperative terminations may be used with the sense of the past tense (From an interview with Prof. K.K.A. Venkatachari, February 1987).
- 56 Tirumaṅkai Ālvār identifies the Gajendra episode with the Lord at Śrīraṅgam in PTM 5.8.3.
- 57 The idea of Viṣṇu’s hurried response to the trumpeting of the elephant Gajendra being viewed with wonder by the residents of Vaiṣṇa is expressed also in *Toṇṇaraṭippoti* Ālvār, *TMālai*, v. 44.
- 64 “According to the Maxim of Milk and Sugar” (*sitākṣīra-nyāyena*) refers to the maxim based on the example of the mixing of milk and sugar. When milk and sugar are mixed together, you cannot differentiate between them.
- 74 “dependent upon the temple priests” (*arcaka-parādhina*). *Arcakas* are temple priests who are specialists in ritual performances. The first half of this stanza refers to the previous stotra verses in which Bhaṭṭar has enumerated and praised the qualities of Viṣṇu’s transcendent form (vs. 27-38) and His occasional incarnations (vs. 39, 49-73). In the second part of the stanza, Bhaṭṭar introduces the topic of Viṣṇu’s iconic incarnations. Doctrinally, this is an important and often quoted stanza because it emphasizes the importance of God’s presence incarnate in the worshippable temple icon (*arcāvatāra*).
- 75 Sleeping in the unsteady awakened state refers to the Lord at Śrīraṅgam’s *yoga-nidrā*. It is interesting to note that the *vyūhas* are always in the state of *yoga-nidrā* since they are associated with creation, the idea being that when thinking deeply, or planning seriously, the eyes are often half-closed. The Pāñcarātra Āgama texts refer to the time of the temple icon’s four-month slumber (*yoga-nidrā*) as a time when the daily temple rituals (*nitya*) continue, but special (*naimittika* and *kāmya*) rituals are prohibited.

- 77 “The waving of lights” (*nirāñjana*) refers to the Pāñcarātra Āgamic ritual which involves the waving of lighted lamps before an icon as an act of adoration.
- 79 Both the Tamil and Sanskrit commentaries gloss the implied subject of the verb as *Gāyatrī Mantra*.
 “The Golden One” (*suvarṇa*) is based on ChUp 1.6.6.
 “Red-lotus-eyed [Lord]” is an epithet of historical importance in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. According to a popular hagiographical story, Rāmānuja broke with his teacher Yā-dava Prakāśa over the interpretation of this epithet.
- 81 Compare with BhG 9:15.
- 85 The twenty-four *tattvas* include *prakṛti*, *mahat*, *ahamkāra*, the five elements, the five qualities inseparable from the five elements, the five sense organs, the five organs of knowledge, and *manas*.
- 86 Compare with BhG 9:14 and 9:29.
- 87 Theologically, this is an important stanza, for here Bhaṭṭar proclaims Lord Viṣṇu as both the means (*upāya*) and the goal (*upeya*).
- 88 In medieval India, kings had the discretionary power to increase or decrease the value of coins such as the cowry-shell.
- 90 This stanza substantiates Bhaṭṭar’s position within Śrīvaiṣṇavism as an Ācārya, called here a *deśika* or [spiritual] guide.
- 93 “Maxim of the Silkworm in its Cocoon” (*kośakāra-nyāya*) describes the silkworm which makes a cocoon from out of its own mouth and then dies there, unable to come out.
- 95 TVM 7.5.2 refers to the Lord’s facing of all kinds of unbearable things during his incarnations here on earth.
- 99 “offered to the gods in the Vedic sacrifice” (*deva-vaṣaṭ kṛtam*, lit., “uttered [the word] ‘vaṣaṭ’ to the gods”). *Vaṣaṭ* is an indeclinable exclamation spoken by the Hotṛi priest at the conclusion of the Vedic sacrifice.
- 102 This stanza may well refer to the ritual of *pañca-saṁskāra*.

Śrī Guṇa Ratnakośa

1

I join my palms together in supplication to Śrī
who makes fruitful by her approving glances
the effort of Hari [expended] in the creation of
the entire [universe of] sentient beings
and insentient matter.

2

We take refuge with Śrī
King Raṅga's First Queen
who [glows like] the flame
of an auspicious lamp
in the palace of Śrīraṅgam,
the play of a minute portion of whose
sidelong budding-blossom covered glance
effects [the manifestation of]
the cherished splendour-filled
group of the seven worlds.

3

The desire-granting creeper that is Lakṣmī
who has black bees [enjoying]
the broad flower blossom clusters
that are her breasts and eyes
enriches Śrī's tree-like companion [Lord Viṣṇu]
at the commencement of her embrace

of His slender trunk
with arms shining on all sides.

May she likewise adorn me
with her sidelong glances.

4

May Śrī cover and protect me
with her sidelong glances
understood only by a mind
resembling nectar-billows

she whose eyebrow-movements
are the determining factor
in the gradations [assigned
at the time] of the creation
of non-moving [things] and moving [beings]

whose footprints on Viṣṇu's chest
the Vedāntas accept
as conclusive evidence of His supremacy

whose amorous gestures
make the experience of the Lord's universal form
at the beginning of their enjoyment
[seem as negligible] as play in the palm of the hand.

5

Our desire to praise you
far exceeds our capability!

Even [gods] of olden times such as Brahmā said:
"Who are we to praise Your glory?"

O Goddess!
Ignorant in the language of speech and mind,
we who have [nothing except]

low and miserable words
still strive to sound forth Your glory.

Hail to the greatness of our words!

6

O Goddess!
Poets say that
the elaborator of the auspicious qualities
of one who is to be celebrated
is called a "praiser" (*stota*).

This task of praising you
rests on me alone
because you have accepted
my impatient words of praise.

O Prosperous One!
Let your [auspicious qualities]
beginning with patience
generosity
and compassion
pour forth their own fame!

7

Let Lakṣmī herself
First Queen of the King at [Śrī]raṅgam
perfect my beautiful verse
with her sweet glances.

Poets with thirsty ears
[will] drink in the greatness of
this [praise-poem]
skillful in euphony,
and graceful in the arrangement of words.

8

You alone make my speech --
 untouched by imperfection
 familiar yet profound
 broad with many [attractive] qualities
 producing affection in the mind [of the listener] --
 continuously enjoyable to the ear
 on account of the harmony of the words
 and shining in every way,
 O Śrī!

9

O śrī of Śrī!
 O One reclining in Śrīraṅgam!

Listen well!
 We say here that the glorious Śrī
 very dear to Your heart
 is greater even than You!

Upon hearing this,
 may Your eyes roll with joy!

May hundreds of upper garments
 [worn] on Your shoulders
 burst [as Your chest swells]
 from excess of delight!

10

O Goddess!
 The great elders proclaim Śruti
 a treasure-house [containing]
 piles of the precious gems
 of Your true auspicious qualities.

[The sacred scriptures]
beginning with Smṛtis and Purāṇas
along with Itihāsas and logic
are [the keys] fit for
opening its door.

11

[Among the people] not favoured by your glance
for [even] a moment
some declared the Vedas devoid of authority.

Others [without denying the validity of the Vedas]
proclaimed that this world has no Ruler,
while some maintained that it has.

Some [declared] that the Lord
Who is the possessor of [all] auspicious qualities
is devoid of attributes,
while others maintained that
the quality of good kingship
resides in a beggar! .

O golden creeper
in the courtyard of Śrīraṅga's palace,
just like that
the fools slapped one another!

12

Beholding your greatness hidden in Vedānta
O Lakṣmī

fortunate ones
their mind's eye shining
with the collyrium of devotion
enjoy you like a treasure.

O Possessor of all riches!
They [alone] are fit by birth

to enjoy your divine wealth!
Isn't that true?

13

O Śrī!
Section by section, *Śrī Sūkta* discloses
your abundant good fortune
which we proclaim with the words
"Supreme Sovereign of this world".

The One about Whom *Puruṣa Sūkta* spoke
with the words "Someone rules the world",
its latter portion praised as "your consort".

14

Not only has this Upaniṣad
lifting high its hands
described you as the Controller [of the universe];
Śrīrāmāyaṇa too
gets its very life from your activities.

O my Mother!
The compilers of Smṛtis
along with Purāṇas and Itihāsas
have led the way
[by declaring] the Vedas
a valid proof of your greatness.

15

O Beloved of the Leader [of the Universe]
at [Śrī]raṅgam!
Lofty, auspicious, luminous
weighty, virtuous, and, moreover, pure --
lordliness is the quality that makes one [person]
greater than another
as it gradually increases

from the headman of a small village
clear up to lord [Brahmā],
creator of the entire universe.

Yet the fortune of these and all others
is born from only five or six drops
of your [powerful] glance.

16

Seated [high] upon a proud elephant
with a pearl umbrella
[surrounded] by precious gems
creating a crashing sound
as they dash against his crown,
an [emperor] does not even take notice
of the kings bowing down [before him].

[In front of him] stands another man
destitute and shelterless
pitifully showing his rows of teeth.

[The condition of the emperor]
is dependent upon the opening of your eyes
[and the state of his destitute subject]
is dependent upon their closing,
O Beloved of the King at Śrīraṅgam!

17

To whomsoever your creeper-like eyebrow
desires to move
O ambrosial friend
then [at once all wonderful things]
such as pleasure, intellect, knowledge
courage, prosperity, accomplishment and wealth
repeatedly intent upon being first
compete with each other [in getting to him]
O Indirā

and having reached him,
 and being under his control,
 [become like a rushing river]
 which overflows its banks.

18

The dance of your glance or its absence
 O Lakṣmī
 [divides] this entire [world]
 by nature [both] good and bad
 into being and non-being
 and high and low
 along with the categories of
 moving and non-moving
 [Lord] Brahmā and the utterly destitute
 [the wise] Brhaspati and an [insentient] tree
 and the strong and the weak.

19

Before the creation [of the universe]
 when *cit* and *acit* were mixed together
 your Beloved
 declaring the suitability of the time
 willed to create
 the thousand Cosmic Eggs with their sheaths
 [which contain the fourteen worlds]
 beginning with the earth and the atmosphere
 along with the [five] elements, egoism,
buddhi, the five sense organs,
 the mind, and the five organs of activity
 [solely] for your pleasure,
 O Goddess of the Lord at Śrīraṅgam!

20

The Primordial Man
 showed the multitudes of souls

[all kinds of] sensual enjoyments
 beginning with sound
 and by His own Viṣṇu-*māyā*
 which has the qualities
 [of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*]
 caused them to forget
 the glory of servitude [to Him].

[In His play, the Lord]
 is [like] a man imitating a prostitute
 who causes the lust-filled rogues
 [chasing after him]
 to be laughed at!

O Supreme Sovereign at Śrīraṅgam,
 [a Lord like that] is fit for your mirthful merriment!

21

[Wise ones] have repeated that
 the Supreme Heaven of Viṣṇu
 which transcends the mind
 is beyond darkness
 is very wonderful and immutable
 is the birthplace of of union [with the Lord]
 and is unattainable by my words
 [exists] for your sake, O Mother.

To the person heading toward that place
 the City of the Gods seems like hell!

22

All moving beings and non-moving things
 are [created only] for your play;
 the Eternal Realm too
 exists for your enjoyment;
 the auspicious celestials
 look upon you always

and are intent upon works of service [to you];
 we [your devotees]
 are among those led solely by your grace;
 the Supreme Person [Himself]
 is your Owner.

O Supreme Sovereign at Śrīraṅgam!
 [All] these things are surely assistants
 in the diffusion of your [glory]!

23

O auspicious one in the house of Śrīraṅgam's Lord!
 [The city] known as Ayodhyā and Aparājitā
 [situated] beyond the Highest Heaven,
 filled with beings having a thick abundance
 of wonderful enjoyment
 flowing like ambrosia,

the goal of your devotees,
 which has town guards fearful of your commands
 and tender [toward the devotees]
 on account of your blessings

[wise ones] know as the capital city
 belonging to you two.

24

O Śrī!
 O Prosperous One!
 They say that the gem-studded audience hall
 belonging to you two in that [capital city]
 a place free from fear
 and the sole ocean of bliss
 is the resting-place of your subjects
 limitless like your grace
 who have serving instruments
 such as bow, discus, and sword

carried out of their desire to serve you
and who because of their affection
take great pains in the unnecessary protection
[of you and the Lord].

25

Having spread [into a bed]
the Serpent (*bhoga*) Ananta
soft to the touch
and fragrant like a garland,
you who lead the entire world
under a single umbrella --
a canopy formed from the splendour
of the serpent's expanded hood
of jewels shining above --
and are worthy of your Beloved
with His innumerable majestic qualities
appropriate to the *śāntodita* state
provide enjoyments (*bhogān*), O Goddess,
abounding in thick *rasa*
due to your state of non-separation
from each other.

26

O Goddess!
As if with your own breasts, arms, and eyes,
You console your Beloved with *Nīlā*, *Bhūmi*
and His thousand other consorts
who are inherently enjoyable to you [and the Lord]
in the same way that flowers and sandal paste
exist [solely] as objects of enjoyment,
and who are led by you as conduits carrying off
[the overflow] from [your and Viṣṇu's]
fully satisfying love.

27

Oh Śrī! O Mother!

Compelled by hearts mixed with deep emotion
 and melting with love,
 eternally present for the activity
 of massaging your feet
 and those of Śrīraṅgam's Lord,
 the eternally free souls
 who enjoy servitude [to you]
 are like friends
 devoid of distinguishing characteristics
 in qualities, form, dress, activities,
 nature, or enjoyments
 eternally free from even a whiff of imperfection.

28

O moon-faced one!
 At the time of the [Vedas'] ascertainment
 of the nature] of the Lord,
 His inherent autonomy
 is [proclaimed] solely by virtue of
 the excellence of His intimate connection with you.

You have the exalted dignity
 of being the very basis of the definition
 of your Husband's [essential nature].

Because you are included [in the definition
 of the supremacy of the Lord]

O Mother Śrī
 Śruti does not refer to you separately.

29

O Kamalā!
 The word "auspicious" is extended to the Lord
 only because of His contact with you.

There is no other reason.

Someone who wishes to tell of
the richness of the [delightful] fragrance
that makes a flower flourish
does not describe that [fragrance] as sweet
because it has the status of being
[a quality of the flower].

30

The one on whom a multitude
of your sidelong glances [fell]
became the Supreme Brahman.

[The ones] below Him
on whom only two or three [of your glances fell]
became [the gods] beginning with Indra.

So, O Śrī, in affirming these [gods],
the Vedas [really] praised you,
[because] the [laudatory] description
of a city and its treasury
is in effect the glorification of its king!

31

O Śrī!
By your very nature you belong to Viṣṇu;
but [even though] the Lord's state of prosperity
is dependent upon you,
He did not become one whose
glory is dependent upon another.

A precious diamond with its own splendour
neither becomes defective
nor is its independence in any way dulled
[because its] lustrous quality is impressed on it
by another.

32

Multitudes of qualities
 beginning with creative power, untiring strength,
 splendour, knowledge, lordliness,
 conquering power, fame,
 acceptance of those bowed down [before you],
 love, and providence for the welfare of others
 as well as fragrance, beauty, charm, and radiance
 are common to you and the Lord,
 O Indirā!

33

Other [qualities] also common to you both
 beginning with youthfulness
 spreading back and forth between the two of you,
 delight us immensely
 as if [we are looking] in a mirror
 [which reflects] your [qualities] in Him
 and His in you,
 O victory flag
 spreading auspiciousness in Śrīraṅgam!

34

[Auspicious attributes] beginning with youthfulness
 are common to you and the Lord;
 having bestowed on the Lord
 the qualities common to masculinity
 such as autonomy, control of the enemy,
 and steadfastness
 and having gifted you
 with qualities exclusive to femininity
 beginning with softness
 dependence on the husband
 compassion, and patience
 a difference in your nature exists
 so that you and the Lord [can] enjoy [each other].

35

Having distinguished
the [dark] cloud [Śrīraṅga]
from the glitter of gold [Śrī]

the state of young manhood
from the tender age of budding womanhood

and the great ornaments
suitable [according to your respective ages]
put in different places on you and on Hari

you two surely enjoy [each other],
O [Lady] who plays in the centre of the lotus!

36

O Supreme Sovereign at Śrīraṅgam!
I think that the things of great value
beginning with the moon
the desire-granting creeper
ambrosia
and honey-liquor
obtained their status as the residue
of the Milk Ocean
because they were joined together with your form
which has the auspicious qualities of
softness, coolness, loveliness
generosity and sweetness.

[But no!] Your divine form
does not deserve
this ineffective, artificial and confused description!

37

When [the devotees] come before [Viṣṇu and Śrī]
to favour them with the practice of prostration,
she who [sits] at His side

shrinks back slightly
out of desire [to attract
the attention] of her Beloved.

In the same lofty category
as a quivering golden *campaka* garland
[decorating Lord Rāṅga's black body]
[and a streak of] gold
on the [black] touchstone [of her Beloved],
[Sri's] form
is not a proper object of speech!

38

May we see you perpetually
seated in the centre of the lotus-couch
with one lotus-foot folded under you
and the other hanging down
[in readiness] to receive my salutation,
with your sweet, charming face
[overflowing] with billows
of wide and compassion-filled sidelong glances
and your lotus-hand
positioned in a gesture inviting fearlessness,
O Mother!

39

May I bow down before Indirā's two feet
lofty in their status as lotus petals
which make fragrant the Vedānta.

From the friction [of Indirā's footsteps],
[the garland] Vaijayantī
[resting] on the chest of her Beloved
gets a freshness as if
drenched with cool dewdrops.

40

The eyes of kings
 polluted with pride
 at being the recipients
 of even a tiny particle of your [glance]
 defy description.

The Veda has known your Husband
 as the Possessor of lotus-like eyes
 solely because His two eyes
 are eternally filled with your beauty (śrī)
 like bees drunk from drinking
 the honey that is you!

O Lakṣmī!
 [If the eyes of kings
 defy description]
 how in the world can
 the greatness of your sideling glances
 be clearly extolled?

41

O Lotus [Lady],
 protect me, a shelterless one,
 with your inherently blissful sidelong glances

by which the Lord [Himself]
 drenched up to the neck in love
 becomes indolent because of intoxication

[currents] so fully filled with tender love
 that they overflow their banks
 drowning people like us in your compassion

[glances] for which which persons
 whose dominion is on the rise

are made to stammer
 and for which even actors such as Brahmā
 [who have a supporting role in the drama
 of the creation of the worlds]
 compete with one another for each and every drop.

42

Lotus pollen wounds your feet
 and the powerful sight
 of your [rough] maid-servants
 causes your body to fade.

Then, O Mother,
 [for one such as you]
 holding a [soft] lotus blossom playfully
 is itself a daring deed
 [while] your action of swinging on the garland
 [resting] on the shoulders of Hari
 makes us shout the words, "Alas! Danger!"

O Śrī!

How can this very tender body of yours
 patiently endure being crushed
 by [my harsh] words?

43

Even now your breasts
 are devoid of the defect
 of full development.

The amorous play of your smile
 sidelong glances
 and eyebrow-movements
 retain a childlike artlessness.

The combination
 of childhood and young womanhood

in all parts of your body
 imparts a fragrance [making you] fit
 to plunge into the stream of sensual enjoyment
 by holding onto the hand of the guide
 Who is [also] your Lover.

44

Preparing a garland from flowers
 in the form of your soft body
 filled with a wonderful fragrance
 blooming with tender youthfulness
 and made cool and moist
 by the nectar of your fresh beauty
 strung on the string of your loveliness
 and fit for the adornment
 of your lover's chest....!

O Goddess!
 O Supreme Sovereign at Śrīraṅgam!
 Shame on me [for speaking like this],
 I who am a poet in sudden confusion!

45

You delight the Granter of Liberation eternally
 O Goddess
 with [your fragile] stem-like form
 drooping from the pleasurable love-sports
 [indulged in] with your Lover
 Who struck the vessels of enjoyment
 touching the secret vital places [of your body]
 like a row of flowers
 enjoyed by delighting bees.

46

O Life-giver [belonging] to Janārdana!
 Your naturally charming form

is awake and shimmering
 with delightful decorations
 such as a golden waist band, pearl earrings,
 a garland of pearls, a forehead ornament,
 a jewelled necklace, and an excellent anklet,
 just like [sweet] milk [is made even sweeter]
 by [the addition of] sugar-candy
 [or an already lovely] boon-bestowing creeper
 [is made more beautiful] by flower-blossoms.

47

Even though the *kaustubha* gem
 Vaijayantī, and the five weapons
 are meant for the enjoyment
 of both you and the Lord,
 Your Husband
 wearing all of them Himself
 as if to spare you
 the burden of bearing them
 enters deeply into you,
 O Jewel-cluster [shining] in the Śrīraṅgam Abode!

48

O Goddess!
 If you had not descended
 in a suitable form
 alongside the Lord
 Who engages in sportive activities
 similar to animals and men
 in every one of His incarnations,
 then His play [here on earth]
 would have been tasteless and uninteresting.
 O Mother with long and lovely eyes
 having [all] the excellence
 of slightly opened lotus blossoms!

49

Looking just like moonlight
 you appeared from a whirlpool
 of swirling nectar-billows
 flooding out from the ambrosia
 of your smile and eyes
 in order to relieve the fatigue
 of Mura's Enemy Who
 arms [decorated by]
 jangling bracelets and garlands
 was stirring the [Milk] Ocean
 as if churning curds.

50

O Mother Maithilī!
 [Rāma] protected Vibhīṣaṇa and the crow
 who were able to utter [the word] "refuge"
 whereas you saved the demonesses from Hanumān
 right then and there
 when they were still sinning against you
 [even though they did not seek your protection].

Rāma's assembly was made
 lighter and more pleasing
 because of you.

Your spontaneous and causeless forbearance
 gladdens [people] like us
 who are full of great sins.

51

O Mother Lakṣmī!
 We are [related to you]
 just like the people of Mithilā!

So with beautiful thoughts
 which have as their intention

the sole pleasure of servitude to you,
 may we see Hari, approach Him, attain Him
 and be pleased at becoming His attendants
 both in this world and the next
 only in view of our relationship to you --
 because Your husband is our son-in-law!

52

Sometimes, O Mother,
 your Lover is just like a father
 [wanting to punish his children for their faults].

With His mind confused
 [by your beauty and your words]
 when you say to Him
 "What is this?
 Who is without fault in this world?"
 He becomes a stream of welfare
 for fault-filled people.

Having caused Him to forget our sins,
 you make us your very own children.
 So you are our mother!

53

O Eternal Companion of the Master!
 O Mother!
 You came here to protect us,
 but met with many hostile encounters
 in this world which is deaf
 to the understanding of your glory.

Dwelling in the forest
 separated [from Rāma],
 your soft jasmine-like foot
 was injured on the stones.

Fie on compassion!
Shame on the uncontrollable independence
of you two!

54

Renowned for His desire to please you
the Lord
reclined on the ocean
churned it
built [a bridge] over it
shattered Śiva's bow as if crushing a creeper
cut Rāvaṇa to bits
and made the demon's headless body dance.

O Maithilī!
what will your husband not do [for you]?

55

Enjoying [Himself] in His own incarnations
and in the glory of His own universal form
with its qualities appropriate to
its thousands of hands, feet, faces and eyes,
Your Lover is drowned
O Kamalā
somewhere near the entry into
the whirlpool of your amorous gestures.

56

You lovingly respect the Milk Ocean
because it is your birthplace,
O Mother!

You nourish the Supreme Heaven
with love for your husband.

[But] having forgotten
 the [Milk] Ocean and the Highest Heaven,
 you [now] delight
 in the Śrīraṅgam Abode
 because you regard it as the appropriate place
 for the protection of people like me!

57

Everything here in Śrīraṅgam abounds in
 [auspicious qualities] beginning with
 generosity, grace, and motherly affection
 towards those who take refuge [with you],
 O Mother!

Moreover, [wise people] declare
 that your occasional incarnations starting with Sītā
 were but a rehearsal
 [for this most excellent form
 of incarnation in a worshipping temple icon].

58

Having granted wealth, the Perishless Place,
 or the Supreme Heaven
 to anyone who bears the “burden”
 of [merely] joining their palms together
 in supplication to you,
 you feel ashamed and exclaim:
 “Nothing at all has been done for this [person]!”

O Mother! Tell me!
 What sort of generosity is this?

59

Devoid of devotion
 without the wealth of knowledge
 without [the merit of] ritual performances

and completely ignorant of right intention
qualification
ability
and repentance,
I commit intolerable sins
toward both you and the Lord,
O Goddess!

I act like a fool
and am unbearable to you.

60

O Mother!
Thus I imitate the elders
of truthful speech
with hundreds of deceitful expressions.

My arms have not the strength
to attain your lotus-feet.

You alone are made my refuge
on account of your grace!

61

Let us be in Śrīraṅgam
for hundreds of autumns
with the group of good-hearted people
free from obstacles and sorrows
having enjoyed happiness, great prosperity
and the relish of servitude [to you]!

May we be pollen grains
inside your lotus-feet.

May you alone be our mother, father,
and also all *dharma*!

Claim us as your own
[by means of your] causeless grace!

NOTES

- 1 “I join my palms together in supplication” (*kr̥to añjaliḥ*, lit. “*añjali* is offered”).
- 3 The precise meaning of this stanza is unclear, even to P.B. Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar (1954).
In this stanza, Bhaṭṭar says that Lakṣmī “enriches” the Lord. For a discussion of the historical origins of the important Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrine that Viṣṇu gets his lordly status and auspiciousness on account of his relationship with Śrī (*śrī-patitva*), see Nayar 1992:228-32. See also vs. 28 and 31.
- 4 “Viṣṇu” (*murabhid*). *Murabhid* is an epithet of Lord, Viṣṇu, meaning “the slayer of [the demon] Mura”.
- 8 In this verse, Bhaṭṭar asks the Goddess to grant him powerful speech. For a discussion of the role of inspiration as a legitimizer of the stotras, see Nayar 1992:48-53.
- 9 *Phaṇāmaḥ* has been translated here as “We say”. This is according to *Kṛdantarūpamālā* 1968:122, which states that verbs having the meaning “to go” can also mean “to understand or to say”.
- 11 For Śiva as a beggar, see ŚRRS II, n. 15.
In this stanza, Bhaṭṭar refers to the people of five philosophical schools: (1) Buddhists and Jainas; (2) Mīmāṃsakas; (3) Nyāya Vaiśeṣikas; (4) Advaitins and (5) Śaivas.
- 13 PuSū praises Śrī as the Lord’s consort thus: “Hṛī and Lakṣmī are your two wives/consorts” (*hṛīṣca te lakṣmīṣca patnyau*).
- 14 The phrase “uplifting its hands” refers to the habit of raising the hands while swearing the truth of something.
- 15 In accordance with the basic teaching of Śrīvaiṣṇavas on Śrī, *vibhu* has been translated here as “lord [Brahmā]”.
While in Śrīvaiṣṇava writings *vibhu* usually denotes Lord

Viṣṇu, "the All-pervading One", the term also can mean "lord" and may be applied to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

An alternative translation is "from the headman of a small village clear up to the All-Pervading One, the controller of the entire universe".

- 16 "Showing his rows of teeth" is a standard Indian description of a person in a destitute and pitiable condition.
- 18 "Dance" (*tāṇḍavam*) is usually associated with Śiva, who creates and destroys the universe by this frantic dance. Note, however, that Lakṣmī need only glance, and her creative power is effective.
- 20 The analogy here is that of a king who wants to entertain his Queen. A fancy dressed male in female clothes is mistaken by those who see him as a real female prostitute, and they approach him. When it is discovered that he is a male, the queen laughs at the scene. Creation is like that -- for the entertainment of Śrī.
- 21 "Darkness" (*tamas*) is glossed as "matter" (*prakṛti*) in Aṅṅaṅkarācāriyar 1954.
- 23 For Ayodhyā and Aparājītā, see ŚRRS I, n. 29.
- 24 "The gem-studded audience hall" (*āsthānaratnam*), the place where the people assemble when royal business is being conducted, is referred to in PĀTM by the Sanskritized Tamil phrase *atānimaṇṭapam*.
- 25 The description of "thick rasa" (*rasa gahana*) is used in an Upaniṣadic passage which says that Brahman cannot be separated from *rasa* (like salt dissolved in water). Here the image is used to describe the inseparability of Śrī and Nārāyaṇa.
- 26 Bhaṭṭar's description of the hood of the serpent Ādiśeṣa used as an umbrella is based on Tirumaṅkai Ālvār's PTM 7.8.1.
- 27 "eternally free souls" (*sādhyaḥ devāḥ*). Bhaṭṭar's stanza is based on PuSū 3.5.11: *yatra pūrve sādhyaḥ santi*. The term *sādhyaḥ devāḥ* appears in his BhGD Nos. 70 and 849, where according to context it must be taken to mean "eternally free souls".
- 28 See Poykai Ālvār, MTA, v. 42.

The theological point made in this verse is that Śrī is supreme among the many consorts of Viṣṇu, and that the other consorts are merely her limbs, and gain their status only through her.

- 29 This stanza and v. 31 are important theologically. They celebrate the central Śrīvaiṣṇava teaching that the lordliness or supremacy of Viṣṇu is based on His association with Śrī (the doctrine of *śrī-patitva*).
- 30 “Supreme Brahman” (*param brahma*). While the view expressed in this stanza is in conformity with the teachings of the early Pāñcarātra Āgamas, it contradicts the usual Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding of Śrī (including Bhaṭṭar’s!), because it suggests that the Supreme Brahman is inferior to and dependent upon the Goddess. I can make sense of the stanza only by interpreting it as extreme hyperbole, with no theological significance at all. See also v. 15 and n. 15, where my translation of *vibhu* as “lord [Brahmā]” is questionable. If *Vibhu* is taken to mean “the All-pervading One”, then surely it refers to Viṣṇu, and the theological statement of v. 15, like that of v. 30, would appear to contradict the Śrīvaiṣṇava view of the Goddess’ role in the creation of the worlds.
- 36 The beauty or qualities of a person are often praised in Sanskrit poetry in the manner of this verse; for example, “the essence of the lotus has become your face”. Bhaṭṭar says that while we can use these typical poetic conventions to compare Śrī to the moon, nectar, a lotus, etc., this kind of description is really inappropriate for her.
- 37 The description of Śrī’s shrinking back would appear to express both her desire to draw close to Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in order to attract his attention to the devotees, and her innate modesty before the devotees who are bowing before them.
- 38 This verse is a *dhyāna-śloka* (verse to be committed to memory) for icon-makers because it gives an idea of how to prepare an icon of Lakṣmī as she appears in Vaikuṇṭha. This is the only model suitable for icons of Śrī to be used for worship independently of Lord Viṣṇu.
- 42 The notion that Śrī is so soft and tender that it is impossible to describe her (even with soft-sounding words) has liturgi-

- cal implications. Harsh-sounding words are never used in Śrīvaiṣṇava temples (in worship-liturgies directed to Śrī or Viṣṇu) for this very reason. Āṇṭāl's TP contains the words *iṛṛam iṛukālē*. In order to soften the harshness of the sound, when these words are recited in the temple or before an icon, their pronunciation, although grammatically incorrect, is changed to *ittum iṛukālē*.
- 48 The idea of the inseparability of Viṣṇu and Śrī is mentioned in connection with their occasional incarnations in VP 9.1.42.
- 51 The son-in-law of an important man of the village is regarded as the son-in-law of the entire village. The commentaries on Bhaṭṭar's stanza unanimously agree that the Lord at Śrīraṅgam is the son-in-law of all the people of Śrīraṅgam. (A similar motif is contained in PĀTM.)
- This verse makes the important theological point that Śrī is a necessary mediator between the Lord and the devotees, and they can approach Him only because of their prior relationship with her.
- 52 This often-quoted verse expresses -- through its imagery -- the important Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrine of Śrī's role as intercessor between the Lord and the devotees (*puruṣakāra*). For a detailed discussion of Śrī's role as Mediatrix in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, see "The Goddess Śrī as Mediatrix" in Nayar 1992:221-56.
- 57 This stanza contains a play upon the most popular etymology of the name Śrīraṅgam: "Śrī's stage".
- 58 "The perishless place" (*akṣara-gatim*) refers to the state of *kaivalya*, that is, the enjoyment of the self. Śrīvaiṣṇavas regard it as an inferior form of liberation. Some understand it as an impermanent stage on the way to *Vaikuṇṭha*, while others teach that it is a final and eternal liberation attained by the practitioners of yogic meditation, but falling eternally short of *Vaikuṇṭha*.
- 60 *Vidhitah*, the ablative of *vidhi*, has been translated here as "on account of your grace", according to TVM 5.1.1, where the word *vidhi* (Tamil, *viti*) can be taken to mean "grace".

Aṣṭā Ślokī

1

The meaning of the sound “a” is Viṣṇu
Who effects the creation, protection,
and dissolution of the worlds.

The meaning of the sound “m” is the individual soul
which is an instrument belonging to Viṣṇu.

The sound “u” governs the unique relationship
of these two.

The three-syllabled *praṇava* [AUM]
the essence of the Three Vedas
revealed this meaning well.

2

In the great *mantra* [AUM *namo nārāyaṇāya*],
by the middle word *namaḥ*
the essential nature of the person is taught;

by regarding *namaḥ* [with AUM, which stands]
before it
the way [to God] is taught;

by regarding it with [the word]
which follows it [*nārāyaṇa*],
the goal is taught.

Having explained that autonomy, self-protection,
and proper activity
are not suitable for other [gods]
and belong to Hari alone,
then [by implication] it has said that
they are not suitable for oneself.

3

I belong solely to the One
indicated by the syllable “a” [Nārāyaṇa],
not to my[self].

The word *nārāyaṇa* means the abode
of the groups of eternal persons (*nara*);

the dative case-ending indicates that
the activities of my natural state of servitude
[to the Lord]
should exist at all times
in all places
and under all conditions.

4

If a person who has surrendered to the Lord
thinks that the soul is the body,
then let him learn well
the third [syllable, “m”].

If he is blinded by autonomy,
then let him become acquainted with
the first [syllable, “a”].

If he has a mind subservient to others,
then let him understand
the second [syllable, “u”].

If he expects to protect himself,
then he should learn
[the word] “*namaḥ*”.

If he is unsteady in his intentions toward kinsmen,
then he should understand
the name “*Nārāyaṇa*”.

If he has a mind moving hither and thither
toward objects of the senses,
then let him understand
the dative case-ending [on the name “*Nārāyaṇa*”].

5

This six word, two part [*dvaya-mantra*]
the essence of the Veda
protects the one who meditates upon it often.

It has explained these ten [subjects]:
the leadership [of Śrī in the role of salvation]
the eternal union [of Śrī and the Lord]
the group of appropriate auspicious qualities
the celebration of [the Lord's] body
the means [to God]
the part to be done [by the the individual soul]
the goal that is the great couple
the lordship [of *Nārāyaṇa*]
the prayer [for protection]
and the abandonment of powerful obstacles.

6

Having taken refuge with Śrī
the ruler of the worlds
and the eternally inseparable consort
of the Supreme Lord,
I resort to the feet of Hari
the possessor of all auspicious qualities

suitable for those seeking refuge
as my chosen *upāya*.

Without any sense of ego,
I pray to perform [the action of] servitude
in its entirety
eternally
and without [any] obstacles
to the Lord of souls
Who is [eternally united] with Śrī.

7

[The Lord says:]
“Having completely relinquished the entire *dharma*
which I previously enjoined
as the means of obtaining Me,
be resolved, you afflicted one,
[and know] that for reaching Me
I alone am the refuge.

Endowed with all [auspicious qualities]
beginning with knowledge,
I free you
who are intent in your resolve
from the obstacles
[preventing] the attainment of Me.

Do not grieve”.

8

O Hari!

Convinced of my state of dependence upon You
and unable to perform or even to renounce
the means [to *mokṣa*]
beginning with *karma*-[yoga],
I am unfit to take refuge [with You].

Overburdened with sorrows,
I sink down in despair.

But remembering the final statement
of the charioteer,
I am certain that You will once again
destroy all the sins committed by me
who has obtained this knowledge
[of the secret of surrender to You].

NOTES

- 1 For the three *mantras* explicated in this stotra, see “Introduction” above, pp. 14-15.
Aṣṭā Ślokī is the forerunner of the *rahasya-grantha*, a genre of religious literature important in Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Because its final verse is directed to the Lord, however, it regularly appears in Śrīvaiṣṇava stotra collections. For more on the *rahasya-grantha*, see Mumme 1987.
- 6 The translation of this stanza is according to the prose order accepted by Tenkalai commentators.
- 8 “The final statement (*caramaṁ vākyam*) of the charioteer” refers to the *carama-śloka* itself, spoken by Lord Kṛṣṇa, who acted as Arjuna’s charioteer. See BhG 18:66.

Śrīraṅganātha Stotra

1

I worship the Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam
Who [reclines] in the sanctuary
which shines like a lotus bud
inside the seven rampart walls
in the middle of the Kāverī [River],
beautiful in the sleeping position
on the couch that is the soft Serpent-King,
with one hand directed to His head
and the other placed on His hip,
and with feet familiar to the hands
of the Lotus [Lady] and Bhūmi.

2

When may I honour again and again
the Overlord at Śrīraṅgam's lotus-like face
[decorated by] an *ūrdhvapuṇḍra* mark
made of musk,
eyes touching His ears,
a lovely petal-like lower lip charming and smiling,
luminous with a pearl crown,
and with a brightness
which robs the minds of those who see it?

3

Crying "O Slayer of Madhu! O Nārāyaṇa!
O Hari! O Enemy of Mura! O Govinda!",
when will I spend my days

uninterruptedly serving
 the luminous dark blue sapphire-like [Lord]
 Who reclines on the Serpent King
 in the city of [Śrī]raṅgam
 adjacent to the bank of the Kāverī ?

4

When will my impurities be destroyed
 by the crystal-pure waters of the Kāverī?

When may I dwell in the dense forest
 on its fatigue-removing bank?

Or when may I serve
 the lotus-eyed [Lord] at [Śrī]raṅgam
 the Possessor of auspicious qualities
 Who is slumbering on Śeṣa
 on the great and holy sand bank?

5

Once again may I see
 the auspicious city of the Raṅgam-Dweller
 adjacent to the Kāverī's
 resplendent delightful waters
 reaching up to the branches
 of the betel-nut trees

which has Vedic chanting murmured
 by the gentle and openly delightful birds

and which is the Final Goal gleaned
 by groups of wayfarers
 on the many and various paths.

6

May I never be in the divine gardens
of the heaven-dwellers
intoxicated and insensible
from the imbibing of [celestial] ambrosia.

O Lord at [Śrī]raṅgam,
[rather] let me be one of the stray dogs
which have taken shelter
in Your city.

7

You perform a propitiatory rite to avert calamity
on the false accusation that a low creature
[has entered the temple],
though it has not even come near [You].

O Master [of the Universe] at [Śrī]raṅgam!
Then what expiation [will] You perform
when a debased creature like me
draws close [to You]!

8

The sage Rāmānuja enjoys [himself] worshipping
at Śrīraṅgam, Kariśaila, Añjanagiri,
Tarksyādri, and Śirṁhācala
at Śrīkūrma, and Puruṣottama,
Badrīnārāyaṇa and Naimiśa
at Śrīmaddvārka, Prayāg, Mathurā, and Ayodhyā,
and at Gayā, Puṣkara and Sālagrāmagiri.

NOTES

- 1 For the significance of the placement of the hands of the Lord at Śrīraṅgam, see ŚRRS I, v. 106.
- 6 Compare with Toṇṭaraṭipoti Ālvār, TMālai: “the company of the excellent gold-bejewelled Urvaṣi, I shall not desire her. I shall seek to be anything on the sacred hills”, quoted in Varadachari 1970:70.
- 8 Sixteen important Vaiṣṇava sacred sites are mentioned in this verse.

Kariśaila is another name for the Lord Varadarāja Swāmi Temple, located in Kāñcīpuram. See VRS, n. 1.

Añjanagiri, or Tirupati-Veṅgaḍam, located in present-day Andhra Pradesh, is the second most often mentioned sacred place in the Ālvār hymns. Only Śrīraṅgam is mentioned more frequently. See Gopalan 1972:79-8.

Tarksyādri is another name for Tirunāṛāyaṇapuram or Melkote, located in what is now Karnataka State. According to the hagiographical tradition, Rāmānuja lived in this pilgrimage place for a number of years. For a summary of the traditional account of his sojourn there and the historical evidence for or against the details of the story, see Gopal 1983. See also Gopalan 1972:103-4.

Simhācala is the name of two different pilgrimage places. One is located in present-day Andhra Pradesh, and contains a hill shrine presided over by Śrīvarāha Lakṣminarasimha (Gopalan 1972:129-30). For the pilgrimage place referred to by Kūreśa as Simhācala, located just outside the Tamilian city of Madurai, see SBS and “Lion Mountain” in the Glossary.

Śrīkūrma, located in present-day Andhra Pradesh, is one of the few pilgrimage places dedicated to Viṣṇu’s incarnation as a tortoise. For more detailed information, see Gopalan 1972:31.

Puruṣottama (named after the presiding deity of the place) is also known as Jagannāthapuri. Located in present-day Orissa, it contains the temple of Jagannātha which,

according to scholars, was built sometime during the 12th century. See Gopalan 1972:132-34.

Badrinārāyaṇa is located high in the Himalaya Mountains in what is now Uttar Pradesh. It is said that Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa first initiated a person in the eight-syllabled *mantra* at this spot. See Gopalan 1972:86-87.

Naimiśa, or Naimiśāranya, is a place usually visited by pilgrims on their return from Badrinārāyaṇa. There is no ancient temple there; rather, God is said to dwell there in the form of the forest. See Gopalan 1972:84-5.

Śrīmadvārka, located in what is now Rajasthan State, is built near the ancient city associated with Kṛṣṇa which, as is stated in the Purāṇas, was submerged in the sea. See Gopalan 1972:89.

Prayāg, known as Allahabad in more recent times, is located in present-day Uttar Pradesh. It is the site of the confluence of the three rivers of Gaṅga, Yamunā, and the underground Sarasvatī. See Gopalan 1972:134-35.

Mathurā, on the banks of the Yamuna River in what is now Uttar Pradesh, is associated with Lord Kṛṣṇa. The ancient shrines were destroyed at the time of the Muslim invasions. See Gopalan 1972:89-91.

Ayodhyā, situated in present-day Uttar Pradesh, is the birthplace of Lord Rāma. See Gopalan 1972:83-84.

Gayā is located on the Phalguni river in present-day Bihar, and it contains a number of important shrines including one to the feet of Viṣṇu and one to the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha. See Gopalan 1972:135.

Puṣkara is located in present-day Rajasthan, about eight miles from Ajmer. Along with Añjanagiri and Sālagrāmagiri, it is regarded as a *svayaṁvyaktha -sthala*, that is, a place holy from the beginning of time. The ancient shrine is in honour of Sri Venugopāla, and the sanctity of the place is said to be described in Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. See Gopalan 1972:137-39.

Sālagrāmagiri, located in present-day Nepal, is sixty miles west of Kathmandu on the banks of the Gandaki River. See Gopalan 1972:85-86.

Glossary of Sanskrit Words

Names and Epithets

A

<i>acit</i>	insentient matter. According to Śrī- vaiṣṇavas, <i>acit</i> is one of the three realities or <i>tattvas</i> , the other two being <i>cit</i> , or sentient beings, and Īśvara, the Lord.
Acyuta	an epithet of Lord Viṣṇu, meaning “He Who is never separated [from His devotees]”, “He Who does not fall [from His status as Lord]”, or “the Imperishable One”
<i>adharma</i>	injustice, unrighteousness, irreligion, de- merit
Ādiśeṣa	the serpent upon whom Lord Viṣṇu reclines both in Vaikuṇṭha and in the Inner Sanctum of the Śrīraṅgam Temple. Śrīvaiṣṇavas re- gard him as a personification of eternal servitude to the Lord.
Aditi	an Indian goddess who is the mother of twelve gods, including Indra and Lord Viṣṇu’s incarnation as Vāmana. See BhP 6.6.39 and 8.18.1.
Agni	the god of fire, who receives the oblations of the sacrifice

<i>ākāśa</i>	the subtle fluid believed to pervade the universe and to be the peculiar vehicle of life and sound
<i>Alaṅkāra</i>	an epithet of Lord Sundarabāhu, meaning "Ornament". Lord Sundara (Tamil, Aḷakar) is praised throughout PĀTM 4.3; verse 4.3.5 describes His dwelling-place as "the mountain belonging to Alaṅkāra" (<i>aḷaṅkāraṇ mālai</i>).
<i>Ānandvalli</i>	a section of TaittUp, often quoted by the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas. See especially vs. 8 and 9.
<i>Ananta/ Anantabhoga</i>	See Ādiśeṣa.
<i>Aparājitā</i>	the name of a heavenly city, meaning "invincible", which often appears in the Upaṇiṣads along with the name Ayodhyā
<i>apūrva</i>	the remote or unforeseen result of a ritual act, such as heaven
<i>Ariṣṭa</i>	a demon disguised as a fierce bull who frightened the <i>gopis</i> of Vraja. Kṛṣṇa twisted his neck and killed him. See VP 5.14.
<i>Arjuna</i>	(1) a character in MBh for whom Lord Kṛṣṇa acted a charioteer, and to whom He revealed His transcendental form as described in BhG; (2) a prominent king of the Haihayas, who through propitiation of Dattatreya, a partial incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, gained the boon of having a thousand arms. On one occasion, he was welcomed at the sage Jamadagni's hermitage where, "out of arrogance and pride", he ordered his men to

steal the sage's wish-yielding cow. When the sage's son Paraśurāma heard of this, he was enraged and slayed Arjuna, lopping off his thousand arms. See also Paraśurāma, and BhP 9.15-16.

arjuna tree

terminalia arjuna. The naughty child Kṛṣṇa, tied by His mother Yaśodā to a wooden mortar, dragged the mortar between two closely set *arjuna* trees and pulled them down. See VP 5.6.8-25.

āśrama

(1) a hermitage for sage-renunciates; (2) four stages in the life of a Brahmin: celibate student of the Vedas, householder, anchorite or recluse, and renunciate of all worldly possessions and concerns

AUM

a sacred syllable said to contain all of the sounds of the universe (sometimes transliterated "Om")

Ayodhyā

(1) the name of a heavenly city, meaning "irrestible, not to be warred against", which often appears in the Upaniṣads along with the name Aparājitā; (2) the name of Lord Rāma's city, on the river Sarayū in what is now eastern Uttar Pradesh

B

Balarāma

the brother and childhood companion of Lord Kṛṣṇa. After Kṛṣṇa had left the cowherdesses in Bṛndāvana for Dvārka, Balarāma acted as Kṛṣṇa's messenger and communicated to them affectionate messages from Him. See VP 5.24.

Once Kṛṣṇa went to Bṛndāvana unaccompanied by Balarāma, and He was apparently overcome by the serpent Kāliya. When His brother Balarāma rushed to assist him and reminded Him of His real character as the Supreme Being, Kṛṣṇa immediately extricated Himself from the hold of the serpent. See VP 5.7.

At a Yādava wedding celebration, Balarāma was challenged to a game of dice; when his opponent attempted to cheat him, Balarāma was laughed at by the onlookers and showed forth his great power. See VP 5.28. See also Kalinga, King of.

- Bāṇa** a thousand-armed demon son of Bali. Bāṇa, a devotee of lord Śiva, fought a battle against Kṛṣṇa, during which Kṛṣṇa stupefied lord Śiva -- who was assisting Bāṇa -- with Jṛmbhaṇāstra (lit, "the missile that causes one to yawn"). See VP 5.33.
- Bhārata War** a war waged between two rival groups, the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, narrated in great detail in the epic Mahābhārata. During the war, Lord Kṛṣṇa acted as Arjuna's charioteer.
- Bhāratī** lord Brahmā's chief consort and the goddess of speech, also known by the name of Sarasvatī
- Bhārgava** a name of Lord Viṣṇu's incarnation, better known as "Rāma with the axe". See Paraśu-rāma.
- Bhauma** one of the names of the demon Naraka, who tormented the gods in Indra's heaven. Kṛṣṇa came to their rescue, and in the battle which

	ensued He slayed thousands of demons and beheaded Bhauma with His discus Sudarśana. See VP 5.29 and BhP 10.59-1-22.
Bhṛgu	the name of Paraśurāma's clan
Bhū/Bhūmi	[the goddess] "Earth", one of Lord Viṣṇu's three main consorts
Brahmā	the four-headed god of creation, who emerges from the navel of his own Creator, Lord Viṣṇu, at the time of the generation of the worlds
<i>Brahma Sūtra</i>	the Vedāntic aphorisms treating of the knowledge of the Supreme Brahman, ascribed to Bādarāyaṇa or Vyāsa and explicated in great detail in Rāmānuja's ŚrīBh
Bṛhaspati	the god of wisdom and eloquence, and the preceptor of the gods
Bṛndāvana	lit., "Radha (Bṛndā's) forest" or "a forest of basil", the name of the woods near Mathurā on the bank of the Yamunā River where Kṛṣṇa spent his youth tending cattle and sporting with the cowherdresses
<i>buddhi</i>	intellect, intelligence, reason, mind, discernment, comprehension, apprehension, understanding

C

<i>campaka</i>	<i>michelia campaka</i> , a fragrant yellow flower contained in the garlands worn by Viṣṇu's iconic incarnations in the temple
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Canda and Pracanda	doorkeepers in Vaikuṇṭha, who stand also at the East side of the Śrīraṅgam Temple
Candra- puṣkariṇī	the name of the lotus pool located on the Śrīraṅgam Temple grounds
cintāmaṇi	lit., “the thought gem”, a fabulous jewel which yields its possessor all desires”, often translated “wish-fulfilling jewel”
cit	lit. “consciousness, sentient beings”. According to Śrīvaiṣṇavas, <i>cit</i> is one of the three realities or <i>tattvas</i> , the other two being <i>acit</i> or insentient matter, and Īśvara, the Lord.

D

Dakṣa	a devotee of Lord Viṣṇu who commenced a sacrifice in order to obtain a son. His neglect of Śiva caused one of Śiva’s devotees to despoil the sacrifice. For a summary of the various versions of the story, see Wilson 1980:I, 88-95. See also BhP 4.2.
Dāmodara	an epithet of Lord Viṣṇu, meaning “He Who [was bound] around the waist with a rope”, based on the incident in which Kṛṣṇa’s mother Yaśodā tied him to a mortar. See VP 5.6.
Daṇḍaka Forest	a forest in the Deccan where Rāma, banished from his kingdom in Ayodhyā, lived with his wife Sitā and his brother Lakṣmaṇa

Daśaratha	the King of Ayodhyā and the father of Lord Rāma, who acted as a mediator between the gods and Rāma (especially over the question of Sītā's chastity after her abduction by Rāvaṇa), because the gods dared not approach Rāma directly
Devarāja	"King of the gods", an epithet first applied to Lord Varada of Kāñcīpuram by Kāñcī-purṇa, one of Rāmānuja's teachers. See his <i>Devarājāṣṭakam</i> (SM 1969:9).
dharma	a collective term for the norms of Hindu social and ritual actions
Dhruva	a king's son who was unable to ascend the throne because he had been born of an inferior mother. Aspiring to an even more elevated rank, he lived a life of intense penance and sacrifice and became an ardent devotee of Lord Viṣṇu. See VP 1.11 and BhP 4.8-12. Even today he bears (or sprinkles) on his head the water of the Gaṅgā flowing from the foot of Lord Viṣṇu. See BhP 5.17.2.
dūrvā grass	the name of a special grass used in Hindu ritual ceremonies, called bent grass or panic grass (<i>panicum dactylon</i>)

E

Elephant Hill	See Hastigiri.
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F

Forest Mountain See Vanagiri.

G

Gajendra

“lord of the elephants”, who was granted liberation by Lord Viṣṇu. Gajendra was caught hold of by an alligator as powerful as himself. Absolutely helpless to rescue himself, he resorted to Lord Viṣṇu as his protector and praised Him. When Gajendra saw Lord Viṣṇu appear in the sky riding on His vehicle Garuḍa, he lifted up his trunk holding a lotus which he offered in worship. Lord Viṣṇu rushed to Gajendra’s rescue. Favoured by the Lord’s grace, he immediately attained liberation. This story likely originated in the milieu of Southern Vaiṣṇavism because, while Gajendra figures prominently in the Āḷvārs’ poems, his story does not appear in VP. It is, however, prominent in the later Sanskrit text composed in the South, BhP. Gajendra is a much-revered paradigmatic devotee for the Śrīvaiṣṇava community. For his full story, see BhP 8.2-4.

Gaṅgā

the River Ganges, the most important of the sacred rivers in northern India. The River Kāverī is sometimes referred to as the Ganges of the South.

Garuḍa

Lord Viṣṇu’s vehicle and attendant in Vaikuṇṭha. Garuḍa is also present near the Inner Sanctum of the Śrīraṅgam Temple.

<i>Gāyatrī Mantra</i>	a <i>R̥g Vedic</i> verse held sacred by all Hindus and recited during morning and evening devotions
<i>Gītā</i>	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> (“Song of the Lord”), sacred to all Hindus and contained in <i>Mahābhārata</i>
Golden River	or “the river made of gold” (<i>hemāpaga, kanaka</i>). One of the names of the <i>Kāverī</i> River based on the Tamil name <i>Poṇṇi</i> , meaning “golden”. See also <i>Kāverī</i> River.
Govardhana	the mountain that was lifted by Lord Kṛṣṇa as an umbrella in order to protect the people of <i>Vraja</i> and their cattle from the rainstorm sent by the god <i>Indra</i> . See also <i>Indra</i> .
Govinda	the Sanskrit name of <i>Rāmānuja</i> ’s disciple and <i>Bhaṭṭar</i> ’s <i>Ācārya</i> . His Tamil name is <i>Empār</i> .
<i>guṇas</i> (three)	the three constituents or “strands” which make up the material world: <i>sattva</i> , which creates wisdom and purity, <i>rajas</i> , which creates passion and activity; and <i>taṃas</i> , which is the cause of ignorance, dullness, and mental darkness
guru	a spiritual teacher and preceptor, usually called an <i>Ācārya</i> by <i>Śrīvaiṣṇavas</i>
<i>gurukula</i>	the house of a guru (<i>Ācārya</i> or preceptor), which may also function as a school for young boys undertaking Vedic studies
<i>guruparamparā</i>	a lineage of preceptors. The <i>Śrīvaiṣṇava</i> lineage begins with one’s own <i>Ācārya</i> and extends through the major <i>Ācāryas</i> , <i>Namm-</i>

ālvar, Viṣvaksena and Śrī, clear up to Lord Viṣṇu.

H

- Hanumān** the monkey who rescued Sitā from her abduction by the evil king Rāvaṇa of Laṅka. His love for and service to Lord Rāma was so great that he is regarded by Śrīvaiṣṇavas as a paradigmatic devotee.
- Hari** (1) an epithet of Lord Viṣṇu, regarded by some to be derived from the verbal root *hri*, “to take away sin”. The more usual Śrīvaiṣṇava etymology, however, is “the green-coloured one” (icons in South Indian temples are often compared to an emerald); (2) an epithet of lord Śiva, as in the name Haripuri.
- Haripuri** the “city of Hari (Śiva)”. See Vāraṇasi.
- Haritavāraṇa-bhṛtya** a man cured of blindness at the Varadarāja Swāmi Temple in Kāñcīpuram. Harita-vāraṇa-bhṛtya is literal translation of the Tamil name Parcai-vāraṇa-tāsar, who was a relative of Tirukacci Nampi, one of Rāmānuja’s teachers. See Aṇṇaṅkarācāriyar 1965.
- Hasti Hill** See Hastigiri.
- Hastigiri** “Elephant Hill” or “Hill of the Elephant(s)”, one of several synonymous names of Lord Varadarāja’s abode in Kāñcīpuram. See VRS, n.1.

Hiraṇyakaśipu the father of the young boy Prahlāda. Angry and jealous that his son was such a true devotee of Viṣṇu, he tried to kill him. Lord Viṣṇu, incarnated as Narasimha, protected Prahlāda, and put Hiraṇyakaśipu to death. See VP 1.17.

I

Ikṣvāku the royal lineage into which Lord Viṣṇu was born as Rāma

Indirā one of the names of Śrī-Lakṣmī, chief consort of Lord Viṣṇu

Indra Vedic god of thunderstorms, who has the rainbow for his bow. The cowherders of Vraja offered sacrifices to Indra at the conclusion of the rainy season. When Kṛṣṇa recommended instead that they worship their cattle and local mountains (especially Govardhana), Indra was angered and sent a rainstorm to destroy their cattle. Kṛṣṇa saved the cattle and people by lifting the mountain over them to serve as a protective umbrella. See VP 5.10-11.

Indrajit the name of one of Rāvaṇa's sons, who tied down Lord Rāma with his magical weapon in the battle between the forces of Rāma and the forces of the evil king of Laṅka

Īśvara lit., "Lord"; according to Śrīvaiṣṇava ontology, one of the three realities or *tattvas*, the other two being *cit* or sentient beings, and *acit*, or insentient matter

Itihāsa

Hindu epic or heroic histories: Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa

J

Jambavān

king of the bears. See VP 4.13.

Janārdana

an epithet of Lord Viṣṇu, meaning “the destroyer of people [who are antagonistic to Himself]”

Jara's son

the father-in-law of Kāṁsa who fought with Kṛṣṇa after Kṛṣṇa had killed Kāṁsa. When he came with his mighty armies, Kṛṣṇa was put to flight just like an ordinary human being. See VP 5.22.

Jaṭāyu

king of the birds or vultures, whose surrender to Lord Rāma is regarded as paradigmatic by Śrīvaiṣṇavas

jāti

(1) status assigned by birth, rank, caste, lineage, or family; (2) genus (as opposed to species), species (as opposed to the individual)

K

kadamba tree

naucles cadamba, a tree with orange-coloured blossoms. Lord Kṛṣṇa climbed up into a *kadamba* tree from which he jumped into the Yamunā River to attack Kālīya, the demon-snake. See VP 5.7.10.

Kaiṭabha	a demon who, along with Madhu, was slain by Lord Viṣṇu. According to the MBh story, the Lord assumed an incarnational body with the head or neck of a horse (Hayagrīva) in order to recover the Veda which had been stolen by the two demons.
Kali Yuga	the final and worst of the four <i>yugas</i> or eras according to the Hindu conception of time contained in the Purāṇas. At the end of this era, the world will be destroyed.
Kaliṅga, King of	a king who asked a man named Rukmin to engage Balarāma in a game of dice. When Balarāma was losing, the king laughed at him. Although in the end Balarāma won fairly, Rukmin denied it. The angry Balarāma killed Rukmin by hitting him over the head with the board on which the game had been played, and then proceeded to knock out the teeth of the King of Kaliṅga, which he had seen when he was laughed at by him. See VP 5.28.
Kāliya	a poisonous demon-snake that lived in the Yamunā River and troubled the people of Vraja. It was defeated by Lord Kṛṣṇa and ordered to return to the ocean. See VP 5.7.
Kalki	Viṣṇu's tenth and final incarnation Who is to appear at the end of Kali Yuga, the fourth and final era. It is believed that He will appear mounted on a white horse from which He will destroy the wicked with His sword, and restore righteousness on earth. See VP 4.24.26-29.
Kamalā	one of the names of Lord Viṣṇu's chief consort Śrī, sometimes translated "Lotus Lady"

Kaṁsa	Kṛṣṇa's cousin, who became His enemy because of a prophecy that he would be killed by one of Devakī's children. He was indeed, killed by Kṛṣṇa. See VP 5.4 and 5.20.
<i>karma</i>	the law of cause and effect whereby creatures experience the consequences of their good and evil actions during the recurring cycle of births and deaths. According to Śrīvaiṣṇavas, the law of <i>karma</i> can be broken only through the grace of Lord Viṣṇu.
<i>kaustubha</i>	a jewel produced at the churning of the Milk Ocean and worn by Lord Viṣṇu as a sign of His supremacy
<i>kautaka</i> threads	threads tied onto the arms of the icon to be worshipped and the priest performing the worship at the beginning of certain ritual performances in the temple. The threads function as the sign of a promise to complete the ritual (on the part of the priest) and to protect the ritual itself and its performers (on the part of the Lord).
Kāverī River	the river which surrounds the island of Śrīraṅgam on which the temple of Lord Rāṅga stands. See also Golden River.
Keśava	an epithet of Lord Viṣṇu, meaning "He Who has beautiful locks of hair"
Kṛṣṇa	one of the most important and beloved of Lord Viṣṇu's incarnations. Kṛṣṇa is especially revered as an infant, as a naughty but powerful young cowherd boy, and as the lover of the cowherdresses in Vraja.

When a king in Vāraṇasi named Pauṇḍraka usurped the emblems of Viṣṇu, wanted the people to worship him, and asked Kṛṣṇa to deliver to him his discus, Kṛṣṇa did so with a vengeance, and the king was killed. The king's angry son was given a boon for having worshipped Śiva, and he chose to have a demoness rise up to kill Kṛṣṇa. Knowing that the king's son and Śiva were responsible for the demoness, Kṛṣṇa, who was playing with dice for sport, had his discus Sudarśana attack her with its circle of flames. Sudarśana consumed the whole of the city, and thus Vāraṇasi was burnt. See VP 5.24.

Acting as Arjuna's teacher and charioteer in the Bhārata War, Kṛṣṇa revealed His divine Self to him, and taught him the secret doctrine of surrender to God. See BhG.

Kṣamā

a name of Viṣṇu's consort Bhūmi, meaning "forgiveness" or "forbearance"

Kumuda

one of Lord Viṣṇu's eight door-keepers, who guard both Vaikuṇṭha and the Śrīraṅgam Temple

Kūrma

lit., "tortoise, turtle". In Lord Viṣṇu's incarnation as Kūrma, He supported Mandara Mountain on His back and used it as a churning stick during the churning of the Milk Ocean.

L

Lakṣmī	one of the names of Lord Viṣṇu's chief consort Śrī, meaning "prosperity, wealth, beauty"
Laṅka	the island now called Śrī Laṅka, which was the kingdom of the evil King Rāvaṇa. Rāvaṇa abducted Lord Rāma's wife Sītā, and took her to Laṅka where she was rescued by Hanumān.
Lion Mountain	an epithet of the hill that rises behind the temple of Lord Sundarabāhu (Tamil, Aḷakar Kōyil). Its association with a lion originates from Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, PTM 9.8.6, where the same hill is described as "that Māliṛuñcōlai where a lion stands roaring" (<i>maṭaṅkal niṅṛatirum māliṛuñcōlai</i>).

M

Madhu	a demon who, along with Kaitabha, was slain by Lord Viṣṇu. See also Kaiṭabha.
Mahābali	a wealthy person generous to Brahmins, from whom Lord Viṣṇu (incarnated as the dwarf Vāmana) begged three paces of the earth. Viṣṇu revealed His cosmic form to Mahābali, and covered the three worlds in three (some say two) strides only. See BhP 8.18-23.
Maithilī	an epithet of Sītā, who was from the town of Mithilā

<i>makara</i>	a kind of mythical sea-monster, sometimes regarded as the emblem of the lord of love, Kāmadeva
Malayadvaja	according to legend, the name of a Pāṇṭiyan king who visited Aḷakar Kōyil, the temple of Lord Sundarabāhu, and became a devotee of the Lord there. In Śrīvaiṣṇava hagiography, he is called Netumāraṇ. The incident of his becoming a devotee is related in PĀTM 4. 2.7. The king, who was travelling in a chariot, stopped at this holy place to enquire about it. He thereupon heard a voice telling him to take a dip in the river. When he inquired as to the river's name, he was told that it was Cilampāru, or "water from the anklet [of Trivikrama]". For information regarding the historicity and date of this king, see Ate 1978:291.
<i>maṇḍapa</i>	an open hall on temple grounds used as a meeting hall during festive occasions
Mandara	the sacred mountain-residence of various deities, which served the gods and demons as a churning-stick during the churning of the Milk Ocean. See also Milk Ocean.
Manu	the progenitor of the present race of human beings, who was preserved from the cosmic deluge by Viṣṇu incarnated as a fish
Marīca	a demon who took the form of an enticing golden deer in order to lure Sitā to a spot where she was unprotected and could be abducted by Rāvaṇa
Mathurā	a town in northern India, the birthplace of Lord Kṛṣṇa

Matsya	Lord Viṣṇu's incarnation as a fish. Growing up in a small water pot, a big earthen pot, a lake, and the ocean, He rescued king Satya-vrata from the cosmic deluge in a boat tied to his crest. See BhP 8.24.
māyā	(a) according to Śrīvaiṣṇavas, the wonderful, astonishing, incomprehensible actions of the Lord; (2) according to Advaita Vedānta, the illusory appearance that is the phenomenal world
Meru	a fabulous mountain regarded as the central point of the universe. The Gaṅgā River falls from heaven onto its peak, flowing therefrom to the surrounding worlds in four separate streams.
Milk Ocean	the ocean on which Lord Viṣṇu reclines. In the theology of Śrīvaiṣṇavas, it is connected with the Lord's <i>vyūha</i> or four-fold creative cosmic emanation. The Milk Ocean was churned by the gods and demons to obtain nectar -- with Mount Mandara for the staff, the serpent Vasuki for the cord, and Lord Viṣṇu Himself in His tortoise-incarnation as a pivot for the mountain as it was spun around. Several things emerged from the ocean as it was being churned: the <i>parijāta</i> tree, the cow Surabhi, the nymphs of heaven, the moon, the goddess Śrī, and so forth. See VP 1.9.
Mithalā	the home-town of Sītā, Rama's wife
Mura	a five-headed demon slain by Lord Kṛṣṇa. See BhP 10.59.1-11 and 3.3.11.

N

Nanda	the foster-father of Lord Kṛṣṇa
Narasimha	Lord Viṣṇu's incarnation in which He assumed the form of a Man-Lion, and emerged from a pillar to rescue His devotee Prahlāda from his father Hiranyakaśipu. See VP 1.20.
Nārāyaṇa	the name of Lord Viṣṇu most frequently used by Śrīvaiṣṇavas, meaning "the Support or Resting-place of created beings or persons"
Nāthamuni	the illustrious first Ācārya of the Śrīvaiṣṇava lineage, the grandfather of Yāmuna and the predecessor of Rāmānuja in the Ācārya-line. He is said to have recovered the Tamil hymns of the Ālvārs.
Nidrā	an epithet of Śrī, meaning "sleep, slumber"
Nilā	one of Lord Viṣṇu's three main consorts, identified in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition with the Tamilian cowherdess Pinṇai
Nūpura River	"Anklet River" (<i>nūpurāpaga</i>) is a Sanskrit translation of the Tamil name Cilampāru. The river is exceedingly narrow, appears to surround the mountain of Lord Sundarabāhu as an anklet chain surrounds the leg, and is sometimes described as the anklet of Viṣṇu's incarnation as the dwarf Vāmana. The name Cilampāru is found both in the Tamil epic <i>Cilapatikāram</i> and in the hymns of the Ālvārs. See, for example, PĀTM 4.2.1, 4.3.9 and 9.9.9, and Āṇṭāl, NTM 9.10.

nyāya (1) a syllogistic or logical argument or inference; (2) a popular maxim; (3) the system of philosophy established by Gautama which deals with all subjects, whether physical or metaphysical, according to its particular syllogistic method

P

pañca-samskāra the five-fold initiation into Śrīvaiṣṇavism, involving ritual submission to an Ācārya. The initiate is the recipient of: (1) the branding of the shoulders with the marks of Viṣṇu's discus and conch; (2) the sectarian forehead mark, called *ūrdhvapuṇḍra*; (3) a Vaiṣṇava name; (4) the sacred *mantras* and the *guruparamparā*; (5) an image of the Lord, with instruction regarding its worship to be performed daily in the domestic shrine

para the Śrīvaiṣṇava technical term for one of the five forms of Viṣṇu. *Para* is Viṣṇu in His transcendent form as He dwells in the Supreme Heaven of Vaikuṇṭha.

Parakāla a Sanskrit name of Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, meaning "one who is death to his enemies". Its Tamilized form (*Parakālaṇ*) was frequently used by Tirumaṅkai himself in his signature verses.

Parāṅkuśa one of the Sanskrit names of Nammālvār, meaning "one who is like an elephant's goad to his enemies". See Śaṭhakopa.

Paraśurāma Lord Viṣṇu's incarnation "Rāma with the axe". After Paraśurāma killed the thousand-

armed Arjuna and exterminated the entire warrior race twenty times, the Brahmin sage Jamadagni expressed disapproval, calling His actions more heinous than the killing of a Brahmin. See also Arjuna. See BhP 9.15-16.

parijāta

a heavenly tree produced from the churning of the Milk Ocean, also called *kalpa-druma*. It is famous for its boon-granting capacity. On one occasion, Kṛṣṇa snatched it away from the celestial gardens of Indra, and carried it to Dvārka at the request of one of His wives, Satyabhāmā. See VP 5.30.

Pārtha

one of the names of Arjuna

Paṇḍraka

a false Vāsudeva who was killed by Kṛṣṇa during the burning of Vāraṇasi. See also Vāraṇasi.

prakṛti

the material creation, and another term for *acit*

prakṛti-maṇḍala

a Pāñcarātric term which denotes the aggregate of the entire material creation

praṇava

the sacred syllable AUM

Purāṇas

a class of sacred texts which narrate legends and ancient traditional history. VP was the most important Purāṇa for Śrīvaiṣṇavas during the period of Rāmānuja, Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar.

puruṣa

(1) the [Highest or Supreme] Person, that is, Lord Viṣṇu; (2) the individual soul representing the principle of sentience in Sāṅkhya philosophy. According to this

view, God is one among many *puruṣas* who, although eternal and omnipresent, is not all-comprehensive. See Hirianna 1974:125.

Puruṣa Sūkta

a hymn in praise of the Primal Man. Regarded by Śrīvaiṣṇavas as an appendage to the *Ṛg Veda*, it functions as an important proof text in Śrīvaiṣṇava literature.

Puṣpahāsa

an epithet of Lord Viṣṇu, meaning “He Who resembles a [tender and delicate] flower-blossom”

Pūtānā

a demoness who haunted Vraja. When she fed the children of Vrajā with her poisoned breast milk, they died instantly. The infant Kṛṣṇa, however, sucked her breast with such violence that he sucked the life out of her. See VP 5.5.57-23.

R

Rāghava

a descendant of Raghu, and consequently a member of the Raghu family, especially Lord Rāma

Raghu family

the name of the lineage into which Lord Viṣṇu was born as Rāma. See also Rāghava.

rajas

one of the three constituents that make up the material world, and the cause of passion and activity. See also *guṇas*.

Rāma

hero of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*, Viṣṇu’s incarnation Who descended to earth with Śrī-Sītā. Sent into exile at the request of His step-mother who wanted her own son to ascend

the throne, He was forced to wander in the forest for fourteen years, along with Sītā his wife and Lakṣmaṇa, his brother. Sītā was abducted by Rāvaṇa and held prisoner in Laṅka. She was rescued by Rāma's loyal servant, the monkey Hanumān. Assisted by the troop of monkey-warriors who threw rocks into the sea making a bridge between the southern tip of India and the island of Laṅka, Rāma defeated Rāvaṇa in battle. After Sītā's rescue, Rāma installed Rāvaṇa's good brother Vibhīṣaṇa on the throne.

Rāma and Sītā have an intimate connection with the temple at Śrīraṅgam, which they are believed to have visited on their return journey from the southern tip of India to Ayodhyā.

Rāmānuja

Kūreśa's Ācārya and Bhaṭṭar's teacher, Rāmānuja is the most famous member of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācārya lineage. He is the author of several philosophical works (including ŚrīBh, BhGBh and VS), and three short prose-poems (GT). He developed his predecessor Yāmuna's philosophy into the full-fledged system later referred to as Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta.

Raṅga, King

See Śrīraṅgarāja.

Raṅgacandra

an epithet of Śrīraṅgarāja, meaning Ranga-Moon, based on the name lovingly given to Lord Rāma, Rāmacandra

rasa

taste, flavour, essence

rāsa dance

a circular dance performed by Lord Kṛṣṇa and the cowherdesses. See VP 5.13.41-61 and BhP 10.33.

Rāvaṇa	the evil King of Laṅka who held Sītā captive. His destruction by Lord Rāma is the subject of the epic Rāmāyaṇa. See also Rāma.
Rukmiṇī	Lord Kṛṣṇa's wife

S

Sagara's sons	the 60,000 sons of Sagara who obstructed the path of virtue in the world. Sagara performed a horse sacrifice, but the horse disappeared. In search of the steed, his sons dug their way to the underworld. Just as they saw the horse, they encountered the sage Kapila (an incarnation of a portion of Viṣṇu), and accused him of disrupting the sacrifice. Kapila reduced them to ashes by his glance. When Sagara heard of this, one of his grandsons was sent to fetch the horse. The grandson propitiated Kapila, who gave him the horse as well as any boon Sagara might choose. Sagara asked that his dead sons might be raised to heaven. The waters of the heavenly Gaṅgā were brought down to earth, and when the water washed the bones and ashes of the sons, they were raised to heaven. See VP 4.4.
Sahya Mountains	one of India's main mountain chains, which forms the northern part of the western Ghats
Śakata	lit., "wagon"; a demon in the form of a wagon who tormented the people of Vraja. The infant Kṛṣṇa was put to sleep under the heavily loaded wagon. When His mother failed to respond to His cry for milk, He

upset the wagon, and all of the townspeople, hearing the racket, marvelled at His strength. See VP 5. 6.1-7 and BhP 10.7.

sāla tree

the *sāl* tree

saṁsāra

this transitory world involving the rounds of births and deaths

Sanaka

See Sanandana.

Sanandana

one of four “mind-born” sons of Lord Brahmā. Declining to attain manhood, they remained forever pure and innocent boys. The others are Sanatkumāra, Sanaka and Ṛbhu.

Sāndīpani

the teacher of Kṛṣṇa and His brother Balarāma. Upon the completion of their studies, the two boys asked their teacher what he wanted for a preceptor’s fee. Recognizing that the boys were endowed with supernatural powers, he requested them to give him back his dead son, drowned in the sea. They marched to the ocean, but were informed by the sea that a demon in the form of a conch-shell named Pañcajana had seized the boy. Having killed Pañcajana, Kṛṣṇa took the conch shell formed from his bones, and when he blew it, the boy came back to life. See VP 5.21.14-31.

sāntodita

the state in which God enjoys His own qualities only, in contrast to the state of *nityodita*, in which He enjoys His creation

Śarabha

an eight-legged mythological animal said to be stronger than a lion. Śiva took this form in order to subdue Viṣṇu’s incarnation as the

	Man-Lion, Narasimha. Śiva is worshipped as Śarabha in an important temple in Tamil Nadu. He is represented there as an animal having three legs, four arms and the face of a lion. One of his front legs is raised and placed on the body of Narasimha.
Śāringa	the proper name of Lord Viṣṇu's bow
Śāstras	the sacred law-books, especially Manu's <i>Dharma Śāstra</i>
Śaṭhakopa	a Sanskrit name of Nammālvār, the most important of the Tamil poets called Ālvārs. The author of the famous thousand stanzas of the TVM, he is referred to in the stotras by his Sanskrit names: Vakulābharaṇa, Vakuladhara, Śaṭhāri, and Śaṭhakopa. Śaṭhakopa, meaning "the enemy of the wicked", is a name used, in its Tamilized form (Caṭakōpaṇ), by Nammālvār himself in many of his signature verses.
Śaṭhāri	a Sanskrit name of Nammālvār meaning "the enemy of the wicked". See also Śaṭhakopa.
sattva	the highest of the three constituents of material creation, which makes persons pure, wise and true and things pure and clean. See also <i>gunas</i> .
Śiśupāla	a man opposed to Kṛṣṇa worship who denounced Kṛṣṇa and challenged Him to a fight, whereupon the Lord cut off his head with His discus, as described in MBh. According to VP, he had been previously incarnated as Hiranyakaśipu and Rāvaṇa. Śiśupāla was one of Viṣṇu's attendants, and so because his thoughts were constantly on

	the Lord (even though in a negative and hateful way) he was united with Him after death. See VP 4.14.11-16. See also BhP 7.1.13-20 and 7.10.35-36.
Sītā	an incarnation of Śrī and the virtuous wife of Lord Rāma, who was abducted by Rāvaṇa and rescued by Hanumān
Śiva	one of many gods, the creatures of Lord Viṣṇu, with whom He often does battle in His incarnations on earth
Smṛti	the complete body of sacred tradition remembered by human teachers, including the Epics, Purāṇas, and Dharma Śāstras. Smṛti texts are less authoritative than Śruti, or “that which is heard” by the eternal <i>ṛsis</i> (that is, the Vedas).
Śrī	the name of Viṣṇu’s chief consort, meaning “wealth”, “beauty”, “auspiciousness”
śrī of Śrī	lit., “the glory/auspiciousness of Śrī”. Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar follow a long tradition in describing Viṣṇu as the <i>śrī</i> of Śrī: (1) “He is the glory of Śrī (<i>śrīyaḥ śrīh</i>)” in Vālmiki, Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyā Kāṇḍa, 44.15; (2) “O God, even for Śrī (<i>tiruvukkum</i>) you are <i>śrī</i> (<i>tiru vākiya celvā</i>)” in Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, PTM 7.7.1; and (3) “[You are] the <i>śrī</i> of Śrī (<i>śrīyaḥ śrīyam</i>)” in Yāmuna, SR, v.45.
Śrī Sūkta	one of the earliest and most authoritative praise-poems to the goddess Śrī, and an important proof text in Śrīvaiṣṇava literature
śrīmat	“the possessor of [the Goddess] Śrī” or “the possessor of wealth, beauty, auspicious-

	ness". The word <i>śrīmat</i> may be employed as a prefix before the names of celebrated persons and texts, where it means "eminent" or "illustrious".
Śrīraṅga, King	See Śrīraṅgarāja.
Śrīraṅgam	the sacred town near the modern city of Tiruccirāpalli, Tamil Nadu. Its temple is the most celebrated among Śrīvaiṣṇava shrines, especially in the praise-poems of the Ālvārs and Ācāryas. Several of the early Acaryas, including Nāthamuni, Yāmuna, Rāmānuja, Kūreśa and Bhaṭṭar resided there.
Śrīraṅgarāja	"King [of the Universe] at Śrīraṅgam", the main icon of the Śrīraṅgam temple in Tirucci. Reclining on the Serpent Ādiśeṣa, the loveliness of His form is highly praised by both Ālvār and Ācārya.
Śrīvaikuṇṭha	See Vaikuṇṭha.
śrīvatsa	lit., "the favourite of Śrī", the name of a mark or curl on the chest of Lord Viṣṇu, regarded by Śrīvaiṣṇavas as a mark of His supremacy
Śrīvatsacihna	one of several names of Kūreśa
Mīśra	
Śruti	eternal sacred knowledge "heard" and communicated by the ṛṣi-sages from the beginning and transmitted orally from one generation to the next in the form of the Vedas
stotra	a praise-poem, hymn of praise, panegyric
Sudarśana	the personification of Viṣṇu's discus

Sugrīva	lit., “beautiful-necked one”. Sugrīva is the name of a monkey who, with an army of monkeys headed by Hanumān, helped Lord Rāma defeat Rāvaṇa and regain Sītā. He was reestablished by Lord Rāma on the Kiśkindha throne which had been usurped by his brother Vāli.
Sundarabāhu	“the beautiful-armed [Lord]”, Who is the main icon at Aḷakar Kōyil, outside the TAMILIAN city of Madurai
Sundarabhuja	a synonym for Sundarabāhu. See Sundarabāhu.

T

tamala tree	a tree with dark bark and white blossoms (<i>xanthochymus pictorius</i>)
tamas	one of the three constituents of material creation, which is the cause of heaviness, illusion, ignorance, dullness and sorrow. See also <i>guṇas</i> .
Tamil Veda	four-thousand sacred Tamil verses (<i>Nālāyira Divya Prabandham</i>) composed by twelve Vaisnava devotees, ten of whom are collectively known as the “Āḷvārs”, and who lived c. 6-10th centuries C.E.
tattva	(1) truth, reality, a true principle; (2) an element or elementary property
tilaka	a forehead mark made of coloured earths, sandal-wood powder and ointments worn

either as a decoration or as a mark of sectarian distinction

Tripura

lit. “three cities”. Three flying cities were obtained by the three sons of a demon through their penance to Brahmā. As they flew about, the three cities began to destroy other cities. Concerned about the matter, the gods approached Śiva, who conquered the three sons by taking the earth as a chariot, Sūrya and Candra as wheels, the Four Vedas as horses, and Brahmā as charioteer, with Viṣṇu made a wing for his arrow (Aṇṇaṅkar - ācāriyar 1971).

According to M-W, the three cities of gold (in the sky), silver (in the air), and iron (on the earth) were burnt by Śiva.

Trivikrama

See Vāmana.

U

upāya

a means to reach or attain a particular goal. In Śrīvaiṣṇava theology, *upāya* functions as a technical term, meaning the means or way to *mokṣa*, that is, union with the Lord. The Lord Himself is both the means (*upāya*) and the goal (*upeya*).

ūrdhvrapuṇḍra

a perpendicular mark of red and white, representing the feet of Lord Viṣṇu and worn on the forehead by Śrīvaiṣṇavas

Uttarakośala

another name of the city of Ayodhyā, Lord Rāma’s birthplace

Uttarāya a leader of the Puru family. When the entire family was wiped out by the missile of an enemy, Uttarāya's sons were restored to life and protected by the Lord. See BhP 3.3.17.

V

Vaijayanti the proper name of Lord Viṣṇu's flower garland which reaches to His knees

Vaikuṇṭha Viṣṇu's Supreme Abode, which is the residence of the eternally free and liberated souls, who serve the Lord and His consort Śrī continuously

vakula tree *mimusops elengi*, a kind of tree with lovely flowers, believed to bloom when sprinkled with nectar from the mouths of beautiful women

Vakulābharaṇa an epithet of Nammālvār meaning "He who is adorned with *vakula* [blossoms]". See also Śaṭhakopa.

Vakuladhara an epithet of Nammālvār meaning "He who wears *vakula* [blossoms]". See also Śaṭhakopa.

Vāli the name of the monkey who usurped the throne of his brother Sugrīva (Lord Rāma's friend and helpmate) at Kiśkindha

Vāmana lit., "dwarf", Viṣṇu's incarnation as a dwarf Brahmin boy Who, in three strides, subdued the worlds. See VP 3.1.42-43. Also known as Trivikrama, His story, often referred to in

	the praise-poems of the Ālvars, is related in great detail in BhP 8.18-19.
Vanādri	See Vanagiri.
Vanagiri	lit., “Forest Mountain” or “mountain of forests”. Vanagiri (and its synonyms Vanādri, Vanaśaila, and so forth) is the name of the locale of the temple of Lord Sundarabāhu (Tamil, Aḷakar Kōyil), located outside the Tamilian city of Madurai
Vanaśaila	See Vanagiri.
Varada/ Varadarāja	the name of the main icon of the Varadarāja Swāmi Temple in Kāñcīpuram, meaning “Boon-Bestower King” or “King of the Boon-Bestowers”
Varāha	Lord Viṣṇu’s incarnation as a lotus-eyed boar Who uplifted the earth in order to save it from the cosmic deluge. See VP 1.4.
Vāraṇasi	the city of lord Śiva, also known as Haripuri. In order to relieve the burden of the world, Lord Kṛṣṇa’s discus Sudarśana burned Vāraṇasi down when one of its residents, a man named Vāsudeva (also known as Pauṇḍraka), falsely assumed the emblems of Viṣṇu and expected the people to do homage to him. See VP 5.34.
varṇa	lit., “colour, a class or race of persons”. The term is used most often to refer to the four principal classes described in Manu’s code: Brāhmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras.
Varuṇa	the Vedic god of the waters or the ocean

Vedānta	literally “concluding portion of the Vedas”, the term is synonymous with the Upaniṣads and the philosophy derived therefrom
Veṅkaṭa Mountain	one of the most popular pilgrimage places in modern-day India. Atop the mountain is a temple whose main deity, Lord Veṅkaṭa or Veṅkaṭeśvara, is believed to be particularly powerful in granting the desires of His devotees. The site is a frequent subject of praise in the hymns of the Ālvars.
<i>vibhava/ vibhavāvatāra</i>	an “occasional incarnation” of Lord Viṣṇu limited to certain times and places, such as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. <i>Vibhava</i> is one of the five full forms of Lord Viṣṇu.
Vibhīṣaṇa	the younger brother of the evil king Rāvaṇa of Laṅka. Vibhīṣaṇa was granted a boon from Lord Brahmā that he should never engage in any mean action. Hence, he forsook his brother-king and joined forces with Rāma who, at the death of Rāvaṇa, crowned him King of Laṅka. His relationship to Rāma is considered by Śrīvaiṣṇavas as a model of surrender to the Lord.
Vimalā	lit., “the spotless one”, the name of one of nine ladies who serve the Lord and His consort in Vaiṣṇava and in the Inner Sanctum of the Śrīraṅgam Temple
<i>vimāna</i>	the palace of a king, and the exterior of the central sanctuary of a temple
Virajā River	lit., “free from <i>rajas</i> ” or “cleansing”, the name of the river which surrounds this <i>saṁ-</i>

	<i>sāric</i> world and must be crossed by the liberated souls on their journey to <i>Vaikuṇṭha</i>
<i>Virīṇca</i>	lit., “the One Who extends beyond”. In the stotras of the early Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas, the epithet usually denotes lord <i>Brahmā</i> . However, it may also be applied to lord <i>Śiva</i> and Lord <i>Viṣṇu</i> .
<i>Viṣvaksena</i>	the commander-in chief of <i>Viṣṇu</i> ’s armies, and His door-keeper and chamberlain in <i>Vaikuṇṭha</i> and in the <i>Śrīraṅgam</i> Temple
<i>Vraja</i>	the name of the area in and around <i>Mathurā</i> where <i>Kṛṣṇa</i> spent his infancy and youth
<i>Vṛndāvana</i>	See <i>Bṛndāvana</i> .
<i>vyūha/ vyūhāvatāra</i>	Lord <i>Viṣṇu</i> ’s four-fold “creative cosmic emanation” taken by Him for the creation, maintenance, and destruction of the universe, and for the protection of souls in <i>saṁsāra</i> . While in the first of the four, as <i>Para Vāsudeva</i> , the Lord is full of all six qualities (knowledge, untiring strength, lordliness, immutability, creative power, and splendour), in the remaining three, only two qualities from out of the six are manifest in each.

Y

<i>Yadu</i>	the lineage into which Lord <i>Viṣṇu</i> was born as <i>Kṛṣṇa</i>
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Yāmuna	an important Śrīvaiṣṇava theologian and poet, and Rāmānuja's immediate predecessor in the Śrīvaiṣṇava line of Ācāryas. The influence of His praise-poems SR and CŚI can be detected in many of the stanzas of Kūreśa's and Bhaṭṭar's stotras.
Yamunā River	an important sacred river of northern India which flows through Vraja, the district in which Kṛṣṇa spent His infancy and youth
Yaśodā	the foster-mother of Lord Kṛṣṇa

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